The Indonesian Prefix /Me-/: A Study in Productivity, Allomorphy, and Usage

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Abstract

Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA) is an Indonesian language learning aimed at foreigners. The most challenging part for foreign speakers in BIPA learning is understanding the morphological processes. This study aimed to describe the prefix /me-/ used by foreign speakers in terms of productivity, allomorphy, and usage. This research was conducted at Yale University, USA, in 2022. The conclusions of this research were (1) The process of affixation of the prefix /me-/ produced six allomorphs; (2) There was the assimilation of the first letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/ in the affixation process; (3) There were four forms that appeared in the form of single words, concatenated words, compound words, and repeated words; (4) There were twelve kinds of meanings produced; (5) There was allomorph /meng-/, which was not in accordance with the Indonesian language rules; and (6) The prefix /me-/ was omitted in everyday conversation in informal situations.

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1. Introduction

Indonesian is one of the languages in Asia which is expected to become an international language and is named the Indonesian Language for Foreign Speakers (BIPA, Rohimah, 2018). In BIPA learning, the most challenging aspect for foreign speakers to understand is the morphological process, covering prefixes, suffixes, infixes, and confixes. Various BIPA lessons in different countries confirmed that Indonesian language morphology was perceived as an obstacle (Hastuti et al., 2018; Kalee et al., 2018). In morphological studies, the formation of a word is explored deeply by focusing on the morphological processes. Morphologically, word formation can be divided into several types: affixation, reduplication, composition, derivation, and inflection (Abrar, 2014; Aziez & Mulyanti, 2021; Darlina, 2018). Hence, affixation was discussed in this study (Martin & Culbertson, 2020). It is a word-formation process involving prefixes, suffixes, and infixes. An affix can be attached to a single word with different categories, such as a noun or an adjective (Hutaminingrum, 2022; Sari et al., 2020). Affixation is also known as a morphological process by adding an affix to the basic form to acquire a new connotation different from its lexical meaning (Creemers, 2018; Rahmawati et al., 2019). Each form of affixation provides a different grammatical meaning to the word it is attached to. It can also be depicted as placing affixes to a word, either single or complex, to create another more extensive form.

Affixation has several forms: prefixes, suffixes, infixes, confixes, and simulfixes (Denistia, 2022; Sutama et al., 2022). The prefix is the process of affixation that occurs at the beginning of a root word, giving it a new meaning. Prefixation is accomplished by adding an affix before a base word. Each prefix produces a different grammatical meaning for the word it is attached to. Prefixes are always bound morphemes attached to free morphemes, which eventually have new meanings. Meanwhile, suffixes are the types of affixes attached to the end of the root word. They can change the word class and also give new meanings. Infixes, also known as insertions, are positioned in the middle of a base word. Confixes are added simultaneously to the root word. Simulfix is a combination of two or more types of affixes, each of which retains its respective meaning and function.

The present research discussed the prefixes in the Indonesian language, including /me-/, /pe-/, /ke-/, /ber-/, /ter-/, /di-/, /ke-/, and /se-/. However, the primary focus was on the prefix /me-/, which was perceived to be very productive in its use in oral and written speech. This prefix functions to form transitive and intransitive verbs. It can be combined with verbs, adjectives, and nouns (Anis & Saddhono, 2016; Saddhono et al., 2020). In this analysis, researchers described the variations of the prefix /me-/ used by foreign speakers, precisely BIPA students at Yale University, USA, who made Indonesian their second language. From a linguistic point of view, Indonesian is a variety of Malay languages. Although it is understood and spoken by more than 90% of Indonesians, the Indonesian language is not the mother tongue of most of them. Most Indonesian people use one of approximately 748 regional languages as their mother tongue (LaDousa & Christina, 2022; Saad, 2020, Widodo & Saddhono, 2012). Indonesian speakers often use colloquialisms or mix the language with other Malay dialects or their mother tongue (Kalin, 2022; Racman, 2022; Saddhono & Hartanto, 2021). Nevertheless, Indonesian is used broadly in universities, mass media, literary works, software, official correspondence, and various public forums, concluding that it is used by all Indonesian citizens (Utama, 2020; Yu et al., 2022).

The Indonesian language continues to proliferate along with the development of humans as its users. It occurs due to several factors, one of which is the absorption of foreign elements such as morphemes, words, or phrases, which lead to adjustments forming new variations or allomorphs. In linguistics, changes in morpheme variations are studied in morphophonemics, which discusses sound changes due to the grouping of morphemes. Morphophonemics is also known as a morphological process in the form of a phoneme shifting as a morpheme encounters the others (Aziz et al., 2022; Darwanto, 2020; Syarifaturrahman et al., 2022). Furthermore, morphophonemic is technically the process of changing a phoneme in the formation of words

that occur due to morphological processes. In this study, researchers discussed the morphological process of the prefix /me-/ concerning productivity, allomorphy, its usage, various meanings, the phenomenon of the use of prefix /meng-/ in online media, and the omission of the prefix /me-/ in informal conversation.

2. Theoretical Framework

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies the structure, form, and function of words in a language. In the concept of Indonesian morphology, there are several things that need to be known, namely: (1) A morpheme is the smallest unit that has meaning in a word. Morphemes consist of base morphemes, which cannot be broken down into other parts (e.g., *makan* "eat"), and affix morphemes, which can be added to base morphemes to form new words (e.g., memakan "eat"). (2) Word class is a grouping of words based on their function and linguistic characteristics. Indonesian has ten word classes, namely nouns, adverbs, adjectives, verbs, pronouns, numerals, question words, prepositions, conjunctions, and exclamations. (3) Reduplication is the repetition of syllables in a word to form a new word that has a more specific or intense meaning. For example, from the word "try" the word *coba-coba* "try" can be formed, which has the meaning *mencoba-coba* "to try". (4) Composition is the combination of two or more words into one new word. For example, from the words *koper* "luggage" and *roda* "wheels" the word *koper roda* "luggage with wheels" can be formed, which means *koper yang memiliki roda* "suitcase with wheels". (5) Affixation is the process of adding a prefix or suffix to a word to form a new word with a different meaning. The affixes that are often used in Indonesian are *me-, -kan, -i, ber-, se-,* and *ke-*. For example, from the word *ambil* "take" you can form the word *mengambil* "take" by adding the affix *me-* in front of it. The concept of morphology in Indonesian is very important to learn in order to understand the structure and meaning of the words used in everyday conversation (Rahmawati et al., 2019).

Morphophonemics is the process of phoneme changes in word formation as a morpheme encounters others (Angelina & Novella,

2022; Genon-Sieras, 2020; Setiyadi et al., 2022). For example, the word *membaca* (reading) consists of two morphemes: /*meN-*/ and *baca*. As the two morphemes encounter, the nasal phoneme /N/ is changed; hence /meN-/ turns into /mem-/. Therefore, changes in phonemes depend on the base words. In conclusion, morphophonemics changes one phoneme into another according to the initial phoneme of the word in question. There are three forms of phoneme changes: changing, adding, and omitting phonemes. It is necessary to reveal as many morphophonemic events as possible to determine the morphophonemic processes. As a result, morphophonemic types can be grouped based on their similarities and can ultimately be used as a rule for the formation of correct derivative words; thereby, mistakes on the level of meaning can be prevented as they will likely interfere with ongoing communication. In this regard, if there is a disturbance in communication, the primary function of language is lost (Estaji et al., 2022; Rahim et al., 2019).

The study of morphophonemics is not discussed at the phonological level as the issue emerges in morphology. Morphophonemics discuss phoneme changes as a result of the encounters among morphemes. Morphophonemic events are the process of changing a phoneme in word formation due to morphological processes (Strycharczuk, 2019; Tambusai, 2020). Morphophonemics studies the combined sounds that form the realization of morpheme combinations, eventually leading to morpheme variations. Changes in sound as a bound morpheme are combined with a free morpheme following specific rules. There are three forms of phoneme changes in the morphophonemic process: changing, adding, and omitting phonemes (Kurmanova et al., 2023; Rajeg, 2022; Saddhono et al., 2023).

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus

The Indonesian corpus starting with /me-/ is a collection of words or phrases in Indonesian that start with the prefix /me-/, which indicates the action or action of the subject in the sentence. The prefix /me-/ is a general form of a verb affix or verb that indicates action or deed. A collection of words or phrases in the Indonesian corpus starting with /me-/ contains

various types of verbs or verbs, such as *mencari, menarik, menolak, memasak*, and many more. These words indicate the existence of activities or actions carried out by the subject in the sentence. The Indonesian corpus starting with /me-/ is very useful for learning Indonesian vocabulary and also helps in expanding vocabulary about activities or actions in sentences (Suprihatin et al., 2023).

3.2. Procedure

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach and a linguistic field method. Researchers conducted several stages in this analysis. The first stage was data collection. The data were obtained from spoken and written speech events in formal and informal situations by students at Yale University (United States of America), University of Social Sciences and Humanities (Vietnam), Thammasat University (Thailand), and Philippine Normal University (Philippines).

3.2.1. Data Collection

Researchers listed several words with the prefix /me-/ and subsequently observed whether there was a process of changing form and meaning due to the attachment of affixes. Afterward, researchers classified the data based on the changes in form and then analyzed them using morphological theory.

3.2.2. Data Analysis

The analysis was carried out on the data prefix /me-/, which had been classified and based on morphological theory in Indonesian. The analysis results were later presented using informal and formal methods. The informal presentation method is the formulation of the analysis results in words, while the formal presentation provides the results by involving signs or symbols (McKinley & Rose, 2020; Podesva & Sharma, 2013).

4. Results

The morphological process is forming new words from a base form through affixation, repetition, and combination (Denistia & Baayen, 2019; Suastini & Apriliani, 2018; Uliniansyah, 2004). In this section, researchers discussed the processes engaged in the prefix /me-/, which could lead to several new forms. The first was the presence of base words to compose more extended words. Afterward, the morphological process that made the base words encounter various affixes. Lastly, the prefix /me-/, which was affixed to, brought up a new word. The prefix /me-/ is known to have high productivity in Indonesian (Intiana & Sapiin, 2014). It undergoes many morphophonemic events to have several representations as follows.

Table 1

Affixation Process of Prefix /me-/ in the Indonesian Language

No	Alphabet	Affixation	Affixed Words	Changes
1	a	/me- + ajak/	[mengajak] (invite)	/meng-/
2	b	/me- + bawa/	[membawa] (bring)	/mem-/
3	c	/me- + cari/	[mencari] (search)	/men-/
4	d	/me- + didik/	[mendidik] (educate)	/men-/
5	e	/me- + embus/	[mengembus] (blow)	/meng-/
6	f	/me- + foto	[memfoto] (take pictures)	/mem-/
7	g	/me- + garuk/	[menggaruk] (scratch)	/meng-/
8	h	/me- + hadir + i/	[menghadiri] (attend)	/meng-/
9	i	/me- + injak/	[menginjak] (step on)	/meng-/
10	j	/me- + jadi/	[menjadi] (become)	/men-/
11	k	/me- + keluh/	[mengeluh] (complain)	/meng-/
12	l	/me- + lihat/	[melihat] (see)	/me-/
13	m	/me- + makan/	[memakan] (eat)	/me-/
14	n	/me- + nikah/	[menikah] (marry)	/me-/
15	o	/me- + olah/	[mengolah] (process)	/meng-/
16	p	/me- + pukul/	[memukul] (hit)	/mem-/
17	q	/me- + qasar/	[mengqasar] (shortening the prayers)	/meng-/
18	r	/me- + rusak/	[merusak] (damage)	/me-/
19	s	/me- + siram/	[menyiram] (water)	/meny-/
20	t	/me- + tarik/	[menarik] (pull)	/men-/
21	u	/me- + usir/	[mengusir] (expel)	/meng-/

22	v	/me- + validasi/	[memvalidasi] (validate)	/mem-/
23	w	/me- + wakil/	[mewakili] (represent)	/me-/
24	x	/me- + xenoglosia/	[mengxenoglosia] (speak a language with which a person is unfamiliar)	/meng-/
25	y	/me- + yakin + i/	[menyakini] (believe)	/men-/
26	z	/me- + zalim/	[menzalimi] (oppress)	/men-/

Table 1 shows six allomorphs of the prefix /me-/ in the Indonesian language used by foreign speakers, as displayed in Table 2. However, one allomorph did not appear in Table 1, namely the prefix /menge-/, which was used very specifically and only occurred when it encountered a word with one syllable. In more detail, the allomorphs of the prefix /me-/ were as follows.

Table 2
Allomorphic Forms of Prefix /me-/ in the Indonesian Language

No	Prefix	Allomorph	Letter
1	/me-/	/me-/	/l/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /w/
2	/me-/	/mem-/	/b/, /f/, /p/, /v/
3	/me-/	/men-/	/c/, /d/, /j/, /t/, /y/, /z/
4	/me-/	/meng-/	/a/, /e/, /g/, /h/, /i/, /k/, /o/, /q/, /u/, /x/
5	/me-/	/meny-/	/s/
6	/me-/	/menge-/	A monosyllabic word

Based on Tables 1 and 2, there were six allomorphs made of the prefix /me-/. There was no phonological change in the affixation of the prefix /me-/ when it was added to the base words starting with the letters /l/, /m/, /n/, /r/, /t/, and /w/. This rule described a morphological process that did not change the root word. The examples of affixation that did not encounter phonological changes were as follows.

[1] /me-/ + /lihat/ → melihat (see)
[2] /me-/ + /makan/ → memakan (eat)
[3] /me-/ + /nikah/ → menikah (marry)
[4] /me-/ + /rusak/ → merusak (damage)
[5] /me-/ + /wakili + i/ → mewakili (represent)

The second rule that occurred in the morphological process of the prefix /me-/ was a change into /mem-/ in the base words with the initial letters of /b/, /f/, /p/, and /v/. The examples were as follows.

[6] /me-/ + /bawa/ → membawa (bring)
[7] /me-/ + /foto/ → memfoto (take pictures)
[8] /me-/ + /pukul/* → memukul (hit)
[9] /me-/ + /validasi/ → memvalidasi (validate)

The third rule contained in the affixation of the prefix /me-/ was the change to /men-/. It occurred when the affixation process combined the prefix /me-/ with the initial letters of /c/, /d/, /j/, /t/, /y/, and /z/. The examples were as follows.

[10] /me-/ + /cari/ → mencari (search)

[11] /me-/ + /didik/ → mendidik (educate)
[12] /me-/ + /jadi/ → menjadi (become)
[13] /me-/ + /tanam/* → menanam (plant)
[14] /me-/ + /yakin + i/ → menyakini (believe)
[15] /me-/ + /zalim + i/ → menzalimi (oppress)

The fourth rule of the affixation process of the prefix /me-/ was a change into /meng-/. All words beginning with a vowel were turned into /meng-/. Examples of affixation of the prefix /me-/ with /a/, /i/, /u/, /e/, and /o/ were as follows.

[16] /me-/ + /ajak/ → mengajak (invite)
[17] /me-/ + /injak/ → menginjak (step on)
[18] /me-/ + /usir/ → mengusir (expel)
[19] /me-/ + /embus/ → mengembus (blow)
[20] /me-/ + /olah/ → mengolah (process)

The fourth rule, the change of the prefix /me-/ into /meng-/, also occurred in words starting with /g/, /h/, /q/, and /x/. The examples of this affixation process were as follows.

[21] /me-/ + /garuk/ → menggaruk (scratch)
[22] /me-/ + /hadir + i/ → menghadiri (attend)
[23] /me-/ + /qasar/ → mengqasar (shortening the prayers)
[24] /me-/ + /keluh/ * → mengeluh (complain)
[25] /me-/ + /xenoglosia/ → mengxenoglosia (speak a language with which a person is unfamiliar)

The fifth rule was the change of the prefix /me-/ to /meny-/, which occurred when it encountered

a word with the prefix /s/. The examples of this morphological process were as follows.

[26] /me-/ + /siram/ *   → menyiram (water)
[27] /me-/ + /sapu/ *   → menyapu (sweep)

The sixth was a special rule in the process of affixation which changed the prefix /me-/ into /menge-/, when the word attached to the affix only had one syllable. The examples of this allomorph were as follows.

[28] /me-/ + /cat/   → mengecat (paint)
[29] /me-/ + /klik/   → mengeklik (click)
[30] /me-/ + /pel/   → mengepel (mop)

There was another interesting finding in the process of affixation of the prefix /me-/, which made the words attached to the affix assimilate (marked with * in some of the examples above). This process involved the letters starting with /k/, /p/, /s/, and t/. The examples were as follows.

[31] /me-/ + /keluh/   → /meng-/ + /k/
mengeluh (complain)   being assimilated
[32] /me-/ + /putar/   → /mem-/ + /p/
memutar (rotate)   being assimilated
[33] /me-/ + /siram/   → /meny-/ + /s/
menyiram (water)   being assimilated
[34] /me-/ + /tarik/   → /men-/ + /t/ being
menarik (pull)   assimilated

The affixation process involving assimilation is often referred to as the KPST rule (Denistia & Baayen, 2023). One of the characteristics of a language is that it has rules that seem inconsistent but are applied consistently. The Indonesian language is an example of this process, especially regarding the prefix /me-/ (Benjamin, 2009; I Andreeva et al., 2021). In simple terms, the affixation of the prefix /me-/ can be divided into two: words that are assimilated and not assimilated. Unassimilated words are those whose basic forms remain the same as before being affixed. Unlike the first, the second group (assimilated words) has a different rule, which some Indonesian language experts name the KPST rule. KPST refers to base words starting with the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/. It simply explains that the root word that starts with these letters will automatically assimilate if it is affixed with the prefix /me-/. This rule has several aspects, as follows:
1. Assimilated root words starting with the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/; only if the second letter is a vowel.

[35] /me-/ + /kawal/   → /meng-/ + /k/
mengawal (guard)   being assimilated

[36] /me-/ + /pukul/   → /mem-/ + /p/
memukul (hit)   being assimilated
[37] /me-/ + /simpan/   → /meny-/ + /s/
menyimpan (save)   being assimilated
[38] /me-/ + /tolong/   → /me-/ + /t/ being
menolong (help)   assimilated

2. Base words starting with the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/ followed by a consonant letter are not assimilated.

[39] /me-/ + /kritik   → /meng-/ + kr
/mengkritik (criticize)
[40] /me-/ + /produksi/   → /mem-/ + pr
memproduksi (produce)
[41] /me-/ + /syahadat/   → /men-/ + sy
mensyahadatkan (creed)
[42] /me-/ + /traktir/   → /men-/ + tr
mentraktir (treat)

3. Some words encounter the affixation of /me-/ and /pe-/ simultaneously. In this case, the root word needs to be carefully determined.

[43] memperhatikan (observe)   → /me-/ + /per + hati + kan/, instead of /memerhatikan/, because it is derived from the word /hati/, which encounters multiple affixes (according to the KBBI (Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language) Fifth Edition).

4. The above rules do not apply to certain words. For example:

[44] /me-/ + /kaji/   → mengkaji (study) instead of mengaji (recite)* → these words have different meanings.
[45] /me-/ + /punya + i/   → mempunyai (have) instead of memunyai (acquire)* → the word "mempunyai" is incorrect under the KPST rule, but it is considered acceptable since it has become a prevailing habit in society.

There is another interesting discussion on the prefix /me-/ concerning the affixation process based on the word forms (Florianus & Syamsi, 2021). There are at least four forms of the prefix /me-/, which are as follows.

1. A base word is a form of affixation that produces various allomorphs of the prefix /me-/, as described in Table 2 above, for example:

[46] /me-/ + rebut   → merebut (snatch)
[47] /me-/ + bawa   → membawa (bring)
[48] /me-/ + cuci   → mencuci (wash)
[49] /me-/ + kerling   → mengerling (glance)
[50] /me-/ + sisir   → menyisir (comb)

[51] /me-/ + bom   → mengebom (bomb)

2. The concatenated word is an affixation that has previously encountered another process, for example:

[52] /me-/ + /per + baik + i/   → memperbaiki (repair)
[53] /me-/ + /temu + i/   → menemui (meet)

3. The compound word is the prefix /me-/ combined with other words, for example:

[54] /me-/ + rebut rampas   → merebut rampas (snatching loot)
[55] /me-/ + gegap gempita   → menggegap gempita (excitedly)

4. A repeated word is a form of the prefix /me-/ that undergoes a repetition that functions as an affirmation, for example:

[56] /me-/ + bolak-balik   → membolak-balik (flip through)

This research discussed one of the prefixes in the Indonesian language, namely the prefix /me-/, which is primarily used to form transitive and intransitive verbs (Nasution et al., 2021; Ulya et al., 2021). Transitive verbs require an object, for example, hitting, kicking, etc. The intransitive verbs do not require an object, for example, jump, spit, etc. Prefix /me-/ transforms a base word into a verb, which is one of the elements of active sentences. Furthermore, the prefix /me-/ has several meanings as explained below.

1. Doing a work or activity; the prefix /me-/ can be affixed with a root word in the form of a verb without changing its meaning while emphasizing it.

[57] /me-/ + tulis   → menulis "to do writing activities"
[58] /me-/ + baca   → membaca "to do reading activities"

2. Forming or making something; this meaning occurs when the prefix /me-/ is attached to the root word in the form of a noun or an adjective, which subsequently has a new meaning, such as to form or to make something.

[59] /me-/ + keras   → mengeras "to harden"
[60] /me-/ + tumis   → menumis "to stir fry"

3. Doing things with tools; this meaning occurs when the prefix /me-/ is attached to a concrete noun, which subsequently forms a new meaning, namely, as a word describing a work done with a tool.

[61] /me-/ + cangkul   → mencangkul "doing something with a hoe"
[62] /me-/ + pahat   → memahat "doing something with a chisel"

4. Acting like or under certain circumstances; This meaning is formed when the prefix /me-/ is affixed to the root word in the form of a common noun, which indicates the entity of a person or thing.

[63] /me-/ + lajang   → melajang "a state of being single"
[64] /me-/ + semut   → menyemut "in an ant-like state or swarming"

5. Searching for or collecting something; This meaning occurs when the prefix /me-/ encounters the root word as a noun. In forming this meaning, the prefix /me-/ must be affixed to the words or names of objects that can be collected.

[65] /me-/ + damar   → mendamar "to collect resin"
[66] /me-/ + rotan   → merotan "to search for rattan"

6. Expressing feelings; This meaning is formed when the prefix /me-/ is affixed to a derived adjective, such as erang (moaning), ringis (grimacing), etc. It can also occur when the prefix /me-/ encounters an adjective indicating an inner attitude.

[67] /me-/ + iba   → mengiba "to express feelings of pity"
[68] /me-/ + aduh   → mengaduh "to express feelings of complaining"

7. Going somewhere; This meaning is formed when the prefix /me-/ is affixed to an abstract object, such as air, or some concrete nouns.

[69] /me-/ + tepi   → menepi "to go to the edge (of a beach or river)"
[70] /me-/ + darat   → mendarat "to move towards the land"

8. Commemorating or declaring an event; This meaning can be formed when the prefix /me-/ is attached to a reflective verb.

[71] /me-/ + kenang   → mengenang "remembering a memory"
[72] /me-/ + renung   → merenung "to express a reflection"

9. Being or doing something several times; This meaning occurs when a root word is a number which can also be followed by the word hari (day), providing a definition of commemorating or celebrating.

[73] /me-/ + seribu   → menyeribu (hari) "to do something for the thousandth of the day"

[74] /me-/ + dua   → mendua "to commit an act of infidelity"

10. Imitating voice

[75] /me-/ + meong   → mengeong "to imitate the sound of meowing (cat)"

[76] /me-/ + gonggong   → menggongong "to imitate the sound of barking (dog)"

11. Consuming, which includes eating, drinking, and smoking

[77] /me-/ + makan   → memakan "to consume or eat food"

[78] /me-/ + minum   → meminum "to consume or drink a beverage"

[79] /me-/ + rokok   → merokok "to smoke cigarettes"

12. Acting like

[80] /me-/ + gila   → menggila "to act like crazy"

5. Discussion

The way someone expresses creativity or feelings through language will never end. One of the latest language phenomena was the affix /meng-/, which had been popular on social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, involving foreign speakers studying BIPA at Yale University, United States. It produced many variations of words that emerged with a specific cause (Mardieva & Vladimirovna, 2022). There was a history of its use that could be traced on social media, such as the tweets on Twitter timeline. It could be noticed that many users initially used the prefix /meng-/ to refer to their favorite animal, namely a pet cat, as depicted in the following tweets.

[81] Kasihan kali *Meng-Q* diincer melulu ma bocili.   (It is a pity that the children are constantly targeting *Meng*-Q (*my Meng*)).

[82] Akibat gabut, si *Meng* jadi gak jinak di kandang.   (The *Meng* is not tame in the cage because there is nothing it can do).

[83] Miss ama *Meng* di rumah.   (Miss with *Meng* are at home).

The tweets were posted along with a photo of a favorite cat. Thus, the /meng-/ referred to in the tweet was a pet cat. The high public awareness of animals made several people keep and give names to their favorite animals: cats, fish, dogs, birds, snakes, crocodiles, tigers, and others. Initially, love for animals was manifested by using onomatopoeic forms (Körtvélyessy, 2020; Laing, 2019). Onomatopoeia is the naming of objects or actions by imitating the sounds associated with them. Some examples of onomatopoeia are crowing, buzzing, roaring, and squeaking. Onomatopoeia can also be defined as an imitation of sound; for example, "Cock-a-Doodle-Do" is an imitation of a chicken sound, and "chuu chuu" is an imitation of a mouse. Thus, the "meow" became an onomatopoeia or imitation of the sound of a cat. However, because people liked the shorter form, they changed it to meng.

After using meng as a cat name and a nickname for loved ones, Twitter users started using it as a prefix. In the Indonesian language, the prefix /meng-/ exists as an allomorph or variation of the prefix /me-/. The Indonesian Language Development and Fostering Agency (2021) states that prefixes are affixes attached to the beginning of a base word or basic form. In the Indonesian language, the prefix /me-/ has allomorphs or variations such as me-, mem-, men-, meng-, meny-, and menge-, as found in words memasak (cook), membaca (read), menari (dance), menyapu (sweep), menggambar (draw), and mengeklik (click).

The prefix /meng-/ in the Indonesian language can be attached to the base words starting with vowels (a, i, u, e, and o), such as *mengajak* (invite), *mengigau* (be delirious), *mengukur* (measure), *mengentas* (get rid of), and *mengolah* (process); and basic forms starting with a consonant (g, h, k, and kh), such as *menggambar* (draw), *menghapus* (erase), *mengkaji* (study), and *mengkhususkan* (specialize). In the previously mentioned words, the prefix /meng-/ serves to change any word class into a verb. For example, the word *gambar* (a picture), which belongs to the noun, turns into a verb, *menggambar* (draw), after being affixed with the prefix /meng-/.

In descriptive linguistic studies, the prefix /meng-/ is a form of the community's creativity in the language (Casini, 2021; Haller, 2021; Swann & Deumert, 2018). Therefore, it becomes a part of the language phenomenon that can be used. It implies that people need these words to express themselves. The representation of expressions involving the prefix /meng-/ was found in the words *mengsedih* (feeling sad), *mengkesel* (feeling upset), and *mengmarah* (feeling mad). The words sad, upset, and mad are included as an adjective. In the Indonesian language, these forms can be attached to affixes, such as ber- and ter-, or negation markers, as can be seen in the words *tidak sedih* (not sad), *tidak kesal* (not upset), dan *tidak marah* (not mad).

Nowadays, netizens frequently use new words on social media (Junaidim et al., 2022; Makhubele, 2019). The words worthy of attention were those using the prefix /me-/ in deliberately incorrect forms, for example, *mengsedih* (feeling sad), *mengkesal* (feeling upset), and *mengcapek* (feeling tired). No obvious source explained how this phenomenon started, but the users undoubtedly realized that these words were incorrect. However, this condition was not a new thing in Indonesia. Social media platforms provide a place for everyone to express their ideas and arguments widely, indirectly initiating the emergence of new vocabularies perceived to be contemporary words, such as the following abbreviations:

[84] bucin   → (budak cinta) (love slave)
[85] gercep   → (gerak cepat) (move quickly)
[86] gaje   → (ngga jelas) (vague)

Language is developing dynamically. Likewise, many contemporary terms or words were included in the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI) update, considering new vocabulary frequently used in daily life and old vocabulary that has shifted in meaning. Some of the new words included in the KBBI were as follows.

[87] galau   → chaotic (pertaining to the mind)
[88] julid   → envy of other people's success, usually expressed by writing comments or posting updates and arguments aimed to corner certain people on social media.
[89] kicep   → being silent due to fear or anxiety

This contemporary development seems to be the gateway to the emergence of new vocabularies in language development. However, the currently trending words involving the prefix /meng-/ were not new but rather old ones combined with the improper use of affixes. For example, the word *mengsedih* (feeling sad), which had the same meaning as sad, was used to express sadness, while the correct words should be *bersedih* (feeling sad) or *menyedihkan* (pathetic). Although this language error was the right entitled to each netizen and likely a joke in cyberspace, the community should consider using the correct words according to Indonesian rules. The prefix /meng-/ remains or even changes into several forms according to the initial letter of the attached root word (Khoshsaligheh et al., 2020).

In this language phenomenon, the users intentionally produced words such as *mengsedih* (feeling sad), *mengkesel* (feeling upset), and *mengmarah* (feeling mad) as a mode of self-expression. One user even explained in his tweet that these words could be formed using the prefix /meng-/ and an adjective. Since these forms differed from those in the Indonesian language, they were considered unique and creative. Furthermore, the community used their creativity in all Indonesian word classes (Fauziah et al., 2020; Widyaningrum et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, these trending forms were not new in the Indonesian language but rather some modifications of pre-existing words. Besides, they were grammatically unsuitable to be affixed with the prefix /meng-/ and should be attached to adverbs or words that can provide information to adjectives. The following are words with the prefix /meng-/ found in online media.

Adjective
[90] mengsedih   → menyedihkan or bersedih (pathetic or sad)
[91] mengkesel   → mengesalkan (upsetting)

Noun
[92] mengmikir   → memikirkan (thinking)
[93] mengjalan   → dalam perjalanan (being on the way)

Verb
[94] mengketawa → tertawa lepas (laugh out loud)
[95] mengpukul   → memukul (hit)

Pronoun
[96] mengitu   → seperti itu (like that)
[97] mengngapain   → sedang apa (what are you doing?)

Interjection
[98] menghadeh   → hadeh; non-standard form of ouch used to complain

Adverb of place
[99] mengSolo   → to/in/from Solo (a City in Central Java, Indonesia)
[100] mengKuta   → to/in/from Kuta (a beach in Bali)

Number
[101] meng 2   → berdua, mendua, kedua (two, cheat, second)
[102] mengdua   → berdua, mendua, kedua (two, cheat, second)

Slang (adjective)
[103] menggokil   → menjadi gokil (awesomely crazy)
[104] menggabut   → menjadi gabut (having nothing to do)

Foreign language (English)
[105] meng-K-Pop   → menjadi K-Pop (doing things related K-Pop)
[106] meng-sad   → bersedih (feeling sad)

Based on the analysis results, it could be concluded that the vocabularies starting with the prefix /meng-/ on social media were only a product of the creativity of the language users. All the resulting words already had equivalent forms per the rules of the Indonesian language. Therefore, normative Indonesian language rules could not explain those newly formed terms, so they could not be accepted as a variation of the existing forms. As a result, those words could only be perceived as the ideas that particular groups would accept. In linguistics, they were categorized as slang (Maylawati & Saptawati, 2017), an informal and non-standard language variety that tends to apply temporarily, used by teenagers or specific social groups for internal communication to gatekeep the meaning from outsiders (He et al., 2018). This concept was consistent with the previous descriptions. Some groups did and did not understand the words formed by using the prefix /meng-/. Considering that it was likely to be seasonal or temporary, it was predictable that the community would no longer use those words in the future.

In the development of the Indonesian language, these modified forms could harm the existing rules, as they were seen as confusing the understanding of the proper use of the prefix /meng-/. Therefore, using the prefix /meng-/ in the previously mentioned forms must be stopped since it was regarded as a negative language creativity (Davidow, 2020). Amid the efforts made by the Government of the Republic of Indonesia to internationalize the Indonesian language, people must minimize the forms that might decline the position of Indonesian as a means of communication. In this regard, Indonesian language users must use the vocabulary following the predetermined rules, both those listed in the EYD (Enhanced Spelling of the Indonesian Language) and the KBBI. Foreign or international speakers have increasingly made Indonesian their second language, which means they use Indonesian according to the rules. Therefore, as native speakers, Indonesians must not harm the language with negative creativity. Furthermore, since it is recognized as the language of unity, we must reflect on its use following the existing rules (Al-Sallal & Ahmed, 2022; Nord et al., 2015).

Language is essential for humans to interact or communicate with each other. Language's dynamic and conventional nature makes it form its pattern according to its use in society (Abduramanova & Rasulmetova, 2020; Antrim, 2021). As a result, there are differences between the language used in formal and informal situations. In the informal context, such as daily conversation, language users often do not consider the existing rules, grammar, and standard and non-standard words. Therefore, everyday conversation tends to focus on how interlocutors can effectively convey a message (Ćorić, 2020).

There were several differences in the use of language in formal and informal situations, one of which was the distinction in diction, in which the formal context used standard words listed in the dictionary.

[107] the word sangat (very) was used in formal situations
[108] the word banget (very) was used in informal situations

There were also differences in sentence structure in formal and informal situations. Language users in informal contexts likely

neglected the regular sentence structures, as described in the following examples.

[109] Besok saya tidak datang → formal
(Tomorrow, I will not come)
[110] Saya besok tidak datang → informal
(I, tomorrow, will not come)

There was a phenomenon in the form of omission of parts of words, phrases, or sentences. In informal situations, words, phrases, or sentences tend to be simpler and shorter, yet their meaning can still be understood, regardless of the omission of certain parts. This phenomenon can be seen in the following examples.

[111] tetapi   → tapi (but)
[112] bagaimana   → gimana (how)
[113] sudah   → udah (already)
[114] Dia pergi ke pasar → Dia ke pasar (S/he goes to the market)

In data [111] to [113], letters were omitted before the words. Meanwhile, in data [114], there was an omission of the word pergi (go), but it did not affect the meaning because there was the word ke (to), which indicated the destination, namely the market.

In everyday speech, the omission of the prefix /me-/ does not make base words starting with the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/ return to their basic forms. The first example is in words beginning with the letter /k/. The word mengopi means meminum kopi (drinking coffee) or menyalin (copying). The root word is kopi (coffee), which is assimilated into mengopi (drinking coffee). In everyday conversation, the prefix /me-/ tends to be omitted, so the remaining part of the word is just ngopi. We often hear someone says, *"Ayo kita ngopi di Starbucks!"* ("Let's have coffee at Starbucks!"), in which the word ngopi does not return to kopi as its basic form. The same thing happens in the word *mengerjakan* (doing work), which is changed into *ngerjain* and does not return to its root word, *kerja* (work). The other examples are the changes in the word *kipas* (*mengipas* (fanning)) into *ngipas*, *titip* (*menitip* (entrust)) into *nitip*, *satu* (*menyatu* (unite)) into *nyatu*, *pasang* (*memasang* (install)) into *masang*, *setrika* (*menyetrika* (ironing)) into *nyetrika*, and others. These words are frequently heard in everyday conversation as examples of assimilation of the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/ after being affixed with the prefix /me-/ and spoken informally.

According to the rules, this phenomenon affects some words that tend not to have the apparent system of use. In everyday conversation, the word *ngantor*, which means *pergi ke kantor* (going to the office), is often heard, although *mengantor* itself is not a standard word and is not listed in the KBBI. Another example is the word *ngampus*, which means *pergi ke kampus* (going to campus). Furthermore, in the same pattern, there is the word *nyalon*, which means *mencalonkan diri* (to run for election), which is often found during legislative elections, as in the sentence *"Pak Budi nyalon"* (Pak Budi registered himself for the election). The word *nyalon* emerges because of the word salon (beauty parlor). Similar to ngantor and ngampus, the word nyalon does not exist in the KBBI, but is used by the community. The word nyalon has the root word *calon*, which turns into *nyalon* as it sounds like the word *salon*. The same condition occurs in the word nyuci. In a conversation, there is a sentence like "Ibu lagi nyuci di belakang" (Mom is washing clothes in the back room). The word *nyuci* is considered the same as mencuci (wash). The base word of menyuci(kan) (to purify) is *suci* (pure) instead of *cuci* (wash), because the letter /c/ uses the allomorph /men-/ instead of /meny-/. Thus, the word *menyucikan* (to purify) certainly has the root word *suci* (pure) because there is a letter /s/ being assimilated. This confusion occurs due to the similarity of sound between the words *suci* and *cuci*.. Therefore, when there is the word *salat* (prayer), many Indonesians are confused about how to attach the prefix /me-/. They are questioning whether it should be changed into *menyalatkan* or *mensalatkan* and whether the consonant at the beginning of the word is one or two. In the KBBI, the standard word is *salat* (not *sholat*, solat, or *shalat*). When it is attached to the prefix /me-/, the word form is changed into *menyalatkan*. Nevertheless, why do Indonesian people never hear the word *nyalat* in everyday conversation? It is likely because the majority think the correct word is supposed to be *shalat* or *sholat*. In short, one way to produce the informal speeches used by the Indonesian people is by omitting affixes, including the prefix /me-/. However, it turns out to form new words that do not return to their basic forms, as occurred in the root words starting with the letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/. Thus, it was proven tricky for people to determine language rules used in daily conversation, considering that one of the characteristics of

language is being arbitrary (Lusekelo, 2016; Oktavianus, 2022; Rohmadi et al., 2021).

Based on the discussion about the process of affixation on the prefix /me-/ in the Indonesian language used by foreign speakers, researchers drew the following conclusions, (1) The process of affixation on the prefix /me-/ in the Indonesian language produced six allomorphs, namely /me-/, /mem-/, /men-/, /meng-/, /meny-/, and /menge-/. (2) There was an assimilation process in the front letters /k/, /p/, /s/, and /t/ when the word was attached to the prefix /me-/ in the affixation process. (3) There were four emerged forms of the prefix /me-/, namely single words, concatenated words, compound words, and repeated words. (4) There were twelve kinds of meanings that resulted from the process of affixation using the prefix /me-/ engaging various words in the Indonesian language. (5) There was an allomorph /meng-/ which contradicted the Indonesian language rules in speech events on social media, especially by the younger generation, which was subsequently categorized as slang. (6) The prefix /me-/ was omitted in everyday conversation in informal situations because it was considered more effective and simple to use.

Acknowledgments

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