

Preserving the Regional Language of Mongondow: A Contrastive Analysis of Word Formation Patterns and Persona Pronouns

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses the similarities and differences between persona pronouns in the regional languages of Mongondow and Indonesian in terms of form, function, and meaning, as well as their implications on the learning of regional languages in schools in Bolaang Mongondow Regency. The method used was a contrastive analysis with a qualitative descriptive approach, which involved observation and interviews with 30 native bilingual speakers of Mongondow and Indonesian. The results show that persona pronouns in both languages have fundamental morphological similarities and syntactic functions, but the pragmatic context in Mongondow is richer and reflects local social and cultural values. The research emphasizes the importance of understanding these differences and similarities as the basis for the development of effective local content teaching materials to support the preservation of regional languages. In addition, the results of the research are expected to encourage the integration of local content of the Mongondow language in competency-based curricula in schools and motivate the younger generation to preserve regional languages. This study also paves the way for further research to expand other linguistic aspects for the sustainable preservation of local culture. This research makes a significant contribution to the development of regional language learning based on empirical data while strengthening local and national cultural identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Regional languages are an important part of Indonesian culture which serves as a symbol of identity as well as the main means of communication in local communities (Alwi, Dardjowidjojo, Lapoliwa, & Moeliono, 2000; Keraf, 1987). Regional languages are an important part of Indonesian culture that serves as a

symbol of identity and a means of communication in their respective regions. In the current era of globalization and modernization, the users of regional languages, especially the Mongondow language, face serious challenges in the form of declining usage caused by the dominance of Manado Malay and Indonesian as national languages and lingua franca (Fishman, 1991; Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). The regional language of Mongondow in particular is facing the challenge of declining use due to the dominance of Manado Malay and Indonesian. This phenomenon threatens the preservation of regional languages as part of the local cultural wealth that must be preserved for the sustainability of unique cultural identities.

Concern about the declining use of regional languages is in line with the central government's policy of placing local content of regional languages in a competency-based curriculum. The implementation of this local content is expected to strengthen the learning and understanding of regional languages in schools (Pujon, 2019; Hornberger, 2008). Therefore, this research is important to support the preservation of the Mongondow language through the contrastive analysis of persona pronouns between the Mongondow and Indonesian languages and its implementation in the education of local content of regional languages in schools.

This study aims to describe the similarities and differences in persona pronouns in the Mongondow and Indonesian regional languages based on aspects of form, function, and meaning. The analysis was carried out in a contrastive manner to obtain a linguistic picture that can be used as teaching materials and effective regional language learning strategies. Thus, this research also contributes to the development of a local content curriculum in regional languages, especially in Bolaang Mongondow Regency. The scope of the study was focused on persona pronouns because person pronouns play an important role in sentence structure and everyday verbal communication, as well as reflecting local linguistic and cultural patterns. This research is expected to be an academic reference material as well as a practice of learning regional languages based on the foundation of the national language so that there is harmonization between the two.

The gap in previous research related to the lack of in-depth linguistic studies that link the use of persona pronouns in the Mongondow regional language with Indonesian, as well as the lack of optimal teaching materials in schools, especially at the primary and secondary levels, are important reasons for conducting this study. Therefore, the results of this research are expected to be able to answer these needs and support efforts to preserve and develop regional languages in the digital era and globalization. Contrastive analysis is a method of comparing linguistic elements to detect similarities and differences, which can be used to improve the teaching of a second language. Persona pronouns are first, second, and third person pronouns with grammatical functions as subject, object, and owner. In this review, the form, function, and meaning of persona pronouns in Indonesian and Mongondow

languages are also discussed as well as the importance of teaching regional languages as part of local content.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology of this study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a focus on contrastive analysis to describe and compare persona pronouns in Mongondow and Indonesian in terms of form, function, and meaning. The research was conducted in Bolaang Mongondow Regency, specifically in East Dumoga District, over a three-month period from August to October 2025. The research subjects were 30 native speakers of the Mongondow language who had bilingual skills in Mongondow and Indonesian, selected using purposive sampling techniques to obtain a representative sample from various age groups and socio-cultural backgrounds (Brown, 2007). Data collection techniques include participatory observation of daily interactions and formal situations in society, as well as semi-structured interviews focused on the use of persona pronouns in real-life contexts. Supporting data was obtained from regional language teaching materials in schools. The instruments used were interview guidelines and observation sheets that had been validated by linguists, as well as conversation recordings and field notes. The collected data were analyzed qualitatively through the processes of transcription, classification, linguistic description, and contrastive analysis to identify similarities and differences between Mongondow and Indonesian languages (Selinker, 1972; Richards & Schmidt, 2002). Data validity is maintained through triangulation of sources and techniques, while reliability is analyzed with inter-coder reliability to ensure consistency of data interpretation. This method is expected to provide a comprehensive and in-depth picture that supports the preservation of regional languages and the development of local content teaching materials.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

In the Mongondow language, persona pronouns are divided into three main categories, namely first, second, and third persona pronouns, each of which has a variation in form and function according to the context of communication. For singular first persona pronouns, Mongondow uses forms such as *aku*, *kita*, and other variations such as *daku* that tend to be used in literary contexts or more formal or poetic expressions. The form *I* is commonly used in informal everyday conversation and signifies familiarity. This form of pronoun also has variations in the form of clichés such as *ku-* and *[-ku]* which are attached to verbs and nouns to mark subjects or objects, for example *I know* (*I know*), *my son* (*my son*).

The second persona pronoun in Mongondow has several forms such as you, you, you, and forms used in various literary forms such as you. Additionally, there are bound forms such as kau- and [-you] that serve as markers of ownership or objects. The choice between you and you is influenced by social aspects such as age, proximity, and politeness. For example, you may seem more rude compared to those of you who are considered more neutral.

For the third persona pronoun, the Mongondow language uses the he, he, and his respectful forms. The form he and he are used interchangeably in various syntactic positions, but only he can function as an object. His form shows respect and is used to refer to people who are older or of higher social status. Persona pronouns also have plural forms, such as we and we are for the first person plural, you are for the second person plural, and they are for the third person plural. These forms play an important role in sentence structure and social interaction in the community of Mongondow language users. The function of persona pronouns in the Mongondow language is not only limited to replacing the noun as subject, object, and owner in a sentence, but also carries a deep pragmatic meaning, reflecting social relations, position, and politeness. For example, the use of certain variations of pronouns can signal familiarity, respect, or social distance between the speaker and the interlocutor. The use of persona pronouns in Mongondow regional language teaching materials is currently limited, so this research can contribute to the provision of valid empirical data for the development of teaching materials that are in accordance with local needs, while supporting the preservation of regional languages.

Table 1. Table of Persona Pronouns in Mongondow with Functions and Example Sentences

Pronoun Category	Mongondow Form	Indonesian Form	Function	Example Sentence (Mongondow)	Sentence Translation
First Person Singular	<i>aku, daku, ku-</i> (prefix clitic), <i>-ku</i> (suffix clitic)	<i>aku</i>	Subject, object, possessive marker	<i>Aku mau makan. / Daku pergi ke pasar. / Anak-ku sedang tidur.</i>	I want to eat. / I go to the market. / My child is sleeping.
First Person Plural	<i>kita</i> (inclusive & exclusive), <i>kita, kami</i>	<i>kita, kami</i>	Plural subject, inclusive and exclusive	<i>Kita pergi ke sekolah. / Kami akan bekerja sama.</i>	We go to school. / We will work together.
Second Person	<i>engkau, kau-,</i>	<i>kamu, engkau, -mu kamu</i>	Subject, object,	<i>Engkau sudah datang. / Mobil-</i>	You have arrived. /

Pronoun Category	Mongondow Form	Indonesian Form	Function	Example Sentence (Mongondow)	Sentence Translation
Singular	(clitic)		possessive marker	<i>mu di garasi. / Kau tahu itu.</i>	Your car is in the garage. / You know that.
Second Person Plural	<i>kalian</i>	<i>kalian</i>	Plural subject	<i>Kalian sedang belajar.</i>	You (all) are studying.
Third Person Singular	<i>ia, dia, beliau</i>	<i>dia, beliau</i>	Subject, object, honorific form	<i>Dia guru kami. / Beliau orang tua kami.</i>	He/She is our teacher. / He/She (honorific) is our parent.
Third Person Plural	<i>mereka</i>	<i>mereka</i>	Plural subject	<i>Mereka sedang bermain.</i>	They are playing.

Klítica such as "*ku-*" and "*-ku*" are attached to verbs or nouns to indicate the subject or possession, as in "*kutahu*" (I know) and "*anakku*" (my child). The form "*daku*" is typically used in literary or formal contexts, conveying a more refined or poetic nuance.

Second-person pronouns such as "*engkau*" and "*kamu*" are chosen based on the level of politeness, age, and the closeness between the speaker and the listener. For example, "*engkau*" sounds more polite and formal than "*kamu*." The form "*beliau*" is an honorific expression used to refer to someone older or of higher social status.

Plural variations such as "*kita*" and "*kami*" distinguish inclusivity and exclusivity in the first-person plural usage, as in "*kita pergi ke sekolah*" (including the listener) and "*kami akan bekerja sama*" (excluding the listener).

The findings of this study indicate that *pronomina persona* in the Mongondow language and Indonesian share many fundamental similarities, both in morphological form and in local syntactic function (Yule, 2010; Levinson, 1983). In terms of form, the first-person singular *pronomina persona* in Mongondow uses "*aku*" and "*kita*," which are parallel to those in Indonesian. The function of pronouns as subject, object, and possessive marker is also maintained with a fairly consistent pattern in both languages, although contextual differences reflect the local culture of Mongondow speakers. For instance, there are reciprocal variations in the use of second-person singular pronouns that are more expressive and reveal aspects of politeness or social intimacy.

The *analisis makna pragmatis* shows that the use of *pronomina persona* in Mongondow not only functions as a grammatical marker but also as a symbol of cultural identity and social relations within the community. This aligns with pragmatic theories that emphasize the role of cultural context in language use. A comparison with Indonesian reveals that although partial assimilation has occurred, the Mongondow language still preserves its distinct characteristics that stand out in interpersonal communication at the local level.

Further discussion highlights the importance of *pemahaman kontrastif* of these *pronomina persona* for the development of local-content curricula (Mufidah, 2017; Permatahati, 2018). The findings show that current Mongondow language teaching materials still fail to address the contextual meanings and pragmatic variations adequately. Therefore, integrating these research results is expected to strengthen teaching materials through a *kontras linguistik* approach, fostering more effective learning and cultivating pride as well as the preservation of local languages (Nasution, 2015; Kuswandono, 2014).

In this study, *pronomina persona* of the Mongondow language are analyzed in depth from the aspects of form, function, and meaning, and then compared contrastively with Indonesian. *Pronomina persona* in Mongondow are divided into three main categories: first, second, and third person, with complex variations such as singular and plural forms, as well as formal and informal forms. For example, for the first-person singular pronoun, there are forms such as "aku," "daku" (more formal/literary), and *klitika* such as "ku-" that attach to verbs and nouns. In the second person, there are variants such as "engkau," "kamu," and "anda," whose use is influenced by social factors like familiarity and politeness. The third-person pronouns include the honorific form "beliau," used to express respect toward someone older or of higher social status.

The function of pronouns in the Mongondow language is not limited to replacing nouns in sentences (subject, object, and possessive marker) but also carries *makna pragmatis* that reflects social relationships and cultural norms of the Mongondow community. For example, the choice of pronoun forms often mirrors the degree of formality, social hierarchy, and interpersonal closeness in daily communication (Thomas, 1995; Kasper & Rose, 2002).

The results of the *perbandingan kontrastif* with Indonesian reveal many structural and functional morphological similarities in *pronomina persona* between the two languages. However, fundamental differences are found in the pragmatic meaning and usage context, which are richer in the Mongondow language, particularly in expressing politeness and familiarity. This underscores the importance of local languages as vehicles for expressing cultural identity and social values of the community.

The study also identifies challenges in teaching the Mongondow language in schools, particularly the lack of teaching materials that accommodate these linguistic and pragmatic distinctions. Therefore, the findings provide significant

empirical data for developing local-content language materials that are more relevant, effective, and contextually grounded. Integrating these findings into the curriculum is expected to strengthen Mongondow language learning while simultaneously promoting its preservation through formal education.

this study provides a comprehensive *peta linguistik* of *pronomina persona* in Bolaang Mongondow Regency and opens up opportunities for further research on other linguistic aspects in support of sustainable local cultural preservation. These academic findings also serve as a practical foundation for teachers, curriculum developers, and language education policymakers to support the revitalization and preservation of the Mongondow language in the modern era.

Discussion

Pragmatic and Sociolinguistic Dimensions of Mongondow Pronomina Persona

The findings of this study reveal that the *pronomina persona* (personal pronouns) in Mongondow do not merely serve grammatical functions such as replacing nouns or marking possession but also encode pragmatic and sociocultural meanings deeply intertwined with the community's system of values. Forms like *aku*, *daku*, *ku-* (prefix clitic), and *ku* (suffix clitic) demonstrate a multilayered linguistic system of personhood and respect, where speakers' pronoun choices reflect both relational proximity and social hierarchy. For instance, the form *daku* in formal or literary contexts is not simply a stylistic variant but a linguistic marker reflecting a distinct level of speech formality deeply rooted in Mongondow social conventions. This linguistic nuance illustrates how the use of personal pronouns in Mongondow goes beyond grammatical substitution to symbolize broader cultural ideologies of politeness, honor, and community belonging.

Empirical field data indicate that Mongondow speakers consciously select specific pronouns depending on interactional conditions such as age, status, intimacy, and situational formality. As reported by Zakaria (2022) in her study of greetings among the Molinow community, the speaker's age and social position play significant roles in determining the choice of pronouns and greeting expressions. This suggests that personal pronouns in Mongondow function as markers of social deixis rather than purely grammatical deixis. This observation aligns with the broader pragmatic framework that pronoun usage serves as an indexical cue signaling the social positioning of interlocutors within a communicative event (Mannix Foster & Welsh, 2023). Hence, the Mongondow pronominal system not only mediates interpersonal relationships but also mirrors the dynamic cultural logic of respect and reciprocity embedded in linguistic practices.

One elaboration that emerges from these findings concerns the sociolinguistic mechanism of respect and hierarchy manifest in pronoun usage. In Mongondow

discourse, pronouns are not merely referential tools but vehicles through which speakers negotiate relative power, social distance, and respect. For example, when addressing elders or individuals of higher social rank, the speaker's choice might shift from *aku* to the more refined *daku*, which indexes deference and acknowledgment of authority. Similarly, among peers or within familial contexts, the use of *aku* tends to establish solidarity and emotional intimacy. In this way, the subtle alternation between pronouns performs the dual function of expressing identity and maintaining social equilibrium. This sociolinguistic dimension reinforces Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of politeness strategies, where linguistic forms the morphology of Mongondow pronouns in this case act as strategic tools for negotiating face needs and adhering to culturally specific notions of etiquette.

A second elaboration relates to the pragmatic and indexical nature of Mongondow pronominal choices, which highlight how language users continuously construct meaning within context-bound interactions. Pronouns such as *ku-* and *-ku* not only mark grammatical possession but also carry pragmatic implications that locate the speaker's stance and involvement. For instance, the prefix *ku-* as in *ku'liat* (I see) emphasizes the speaker's active agency, projecting a sense of immediacy and ownership of the action. Conversely, the use of suffix *-ku*, particularly in expressions of belonging or attachment (e.g., *rumahku* 'my house'), can convey emotional proximity, signifying both possession and affection. In these examples, pronouns are deployed not just to encode referential meaning but to perform social acts—asserting intimacy, expressing attachment, or reinforcing kinship ties. This pragmatic versatility illustrates Silverstein's (1976) concept of indexicality, where linguistic forms point to social relationships and contextual meanings beyond their semantic content. Therefore, Mongondow pronouns operate as semiotic instruments that bridge language structure with communicative function.

A third elaboration centers on the role of pronouns as markers of cultural and ethnolinguistic identity within the Mongondow-speaking community. The maintenance and use of pronominal variants like *daku* in traditional and literary registers exemplify an ongoing effort to preserve linguistic heritage and express cultural continuity. As younger speakers increasingly navigate multilingual environments often switching between Mongondow, Indonesian, and regional lingua francas the selective use of Mongondow personal pronouns embodies a form of identity performance. Using indigenous pronouns in specific contexts, such as community rituals, local poetry, or intergenerational dialogue, becomes a symbolic act of reaffirming membership within the ethnic community. Thus, pronouns are not only devices of reference but also emblems of sociocultural belonging, functioning as linguistic boundary markers that distinguish in-group and out-group identities. This phenomenon aligns with Irvine and Gal's (2000) theory of linguistic

differentiation, which argues that speakers use linguistic forms to construct cultural distinctions and index ideological stances toward tradition and modernity.

In addition to these dimensions, the Mongondow pronominal system also reveals the dynamic interplay between language change and cultural persistence. With increased exposure to Indonesian through formal education and media, the pragmatic range of Mongondow pronouns is undergoing subtle shifts. Younger generations may employ *aku* more broadly, even in situations requiring respect, reflecting emerging egalitarian attitudes. However, community elders often view this as a departure from traditional norms, illustrating how language evolves alongside shifting social values. The coexistence of older and newer usage patterns thus provides a living example of how linguistic structure adapts to sociocultural transformation while retaining its core indexical function. Through this lens, pronouns become windows into the ongoing negotiation between linguistic innovation and cultural preservation a negotiation that defines the vitality of Indigenous languages in modern multilingual settings. The intricate system of Mongondow pronomina persona exemplifies how language operates as a mirror of culture, reflecting complex networks of interpersonal relationships, moral values, and historical consciousness. Far from being mere grammatical markers, these pronouns are linguistic artifacts that carry the weight of tradition, politeness, and collective identity. Their study contributes to broader discussions in linguistic anthropology and pragmatics, offering insight into how small-scale speech communities articulate systems of value through subtle grammatical choices.

The contrast between *aku* and *daku* highlights this pragmatic nuance. The form *aku* dominates daily, informal, and egalitarian communication, while *daku* appears in ritualistic, poetic, or formal expressions, signaling a higher level of deference. Such alternation supports Gumperz's (1982) theory of contextualization cues, in which language forms and speech styles serve as symbolic signals that construct social meaning. Shifting from *aku* to *daku* therefore represents not merely a lexical substitution but an indexical act of social elevation marking respect, reverence, or distance depending on the relationship between speaker and addressee.

From a critical perspective, recent pragmatic scholarship argues that linguistic interpretation cannot be separated from cultural frameworks. The concept of *face*, originally proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), is increasingly viewed as culture-specific rather than universal. In the Mongondow context, "face" operates collectively rather than individually. The honorific pronoun *beliau*, for instance, functions not only to preserve the speaker's politeness but also to uphold the dignity of the community as a social unit. Addressing elders or respected leaders with *beliau* or *ngkana* (in certain dialects) signifies the maintenance of social harmony and the acknowledgment of communal authority. This reflects Duranti's (2015) ethnopragmatic argument that meaning and politeness are culturally grounded rather than universally shared.

Empirically, the data show that Mongondow personal pronouns function as *symbolic indexes* of both identity and social relations. During interviews and observations, speakers were found to adjust their pronoun choice depending on the communicative domain: when speaking to traditional elders, during customary rituals, or within educational settings such as local-content (*muatan lokal*) classes. This pattern resonates with the study of Ratu and Lengkoan (2023), who highlight that Mongondow linguistic structures especially pronouns and affixes have not yet been fully integrated into classroom materials for local-language education. They argue that pragmatic and sociocultural elements such as pronoun use should be central to curriculum design for preserving language vitality.

Interestingly, the Mongondow system challenges the long-standing universalist assumptions in pragmatic politeness theories, which often overgeneralize face-saving strategies across languages. In Mongondow, politeness is not limited to mitigating *face-threatening acts* but instead emphasizes the maintenance of communal harmony and mutual respect. Using *beliau* or its dialectal variant *ngkana* thus expresses reverence that extends beyond the individual, reinforcing collective social balance. This finding echoes the arguments of Dubois and Schegloff (2024), who claim that local languages reveal alternative models of social interaction that resist universalist frameworks in pragmatics.

The relationship among pronoun form, social function, and pragmatic context can be visualized in the following conceptual diagram:

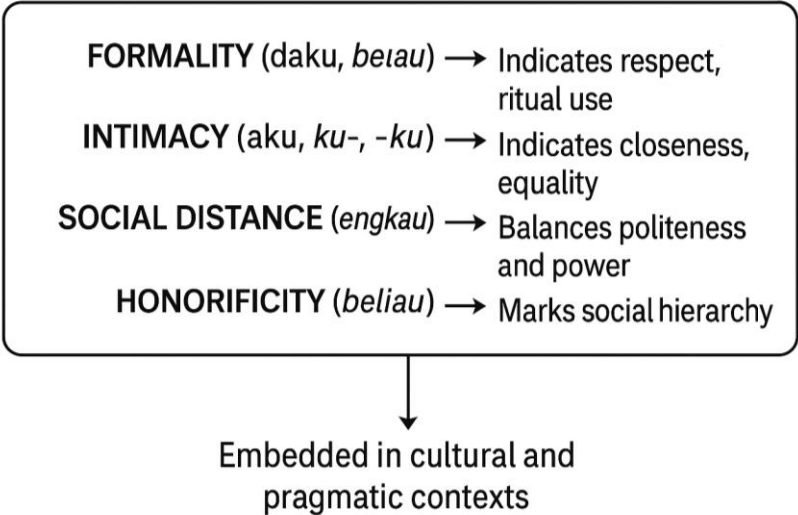


Diagram 1. Conceptual concept proposed for pragmatic and social functions

Morphosyntactic Patterns and Implications for Language Preservation

The morphosyntactic configuration of *Mongondow pronomina persona* reveals a complex and layered system that integrates morphological markers, syntactic positions, and semantic roles in culturally meaningful ways. Unlike in purely analytic languages where pronouns primarily function as independent lexical units,

in Mongondow they operate across bound and free morphemes through cliticization and affixation. For instance, the forms *ku-* (prefix) and *-ku* (suffix) encode both agency and possession, thus extending their grammatical role into the discourse level. This dual functionality illustrates what Ratu (2023) identifies as “morphological interference” in the contact zone between Mongondow and Indonesian an area where affixation strategies reveal structural resilience amid linguistic influence. The Mongondow data thus offer critical insights into how local grammatical systems preserve internal coherence while adapting to sociolinguistic pressures.

From a typological perspective, Mongondow belongs to the Greater Central Philippine subgroup (Kaufman, 2024), where pronominal clitics play pivotal roles in clause structure, argument marking, and topicalization. The presence of pronominal enclitics that attach to verbs or predicates (*mangan-ku* “I eat,” *tidur-an-ku* “my sleeping place”) demonstrates the syntactic flexibility of the language. Such forms parallel the behavior of Tagalog or Maranao clitics, yet Mongondow maintains distinct morphophonemic patterns that resist full assimilation into the Indonesian morphosyntax. Zakaria (2022) notes that these distinctions are not merely linguistic relics but represent an ongoing identity boundary, where morphology acts as a symbolic frontier of cultural persistence. The existence of *daku* alongside *aku* and *ku-* suggests a layered system of subjectivity where morphology becomes a semiotic device of personhood, agency, and cultural identity.

Furthermore, the distributional behavior of pronominal clitics in Mongondow highlights an interesting syntactic asymmetry: clitic pronouns frequently occur adjacent to verbs in declarative clauses but may shift position under emphasis or focus conditions. This dynamic positioning aligns with Austronesian syntactic typology, where prosodic hierarchy often determines surface order (Kaufman, 2024). For example, *ku-mangan* and *mangan-ku* are both grammatical, yet the former emphasizes the agent while the latter foregrounds the action or result. This interchangeability not only reinforces the syntactic plasticity of the language but also suggests that Mongondow morphology functions as a discourse-sensitive system—a characteristic also observed in Northern Mindanao languages. Such structural elasticity allows speakers to negotiate meaning subtly, blending pragmatic emphasis with syntactic form.

The morphosyntactic behavior of Mongondow pronouns also carries implications for educational and revitalization contexts. According to Ratu and Lengkoan (2023), many teaching materials in North Sulawesi tend to simplify or omit clitic-based structures, focusing instead on lexical substitution. This pedagogical reduction risks erasing the deep morphological logic that underpins Mongondow grammar. For instance, when textbooks present *aku makan* as equivalent to *ku-mangan*, they obscure the morphological nuance of *ku-* as an agentive marker rather than merely a possessive prefix. This simplification affects not only linguistic accuracy but also the transmission of cultural patterns embedded

in grammar. As observed by Rambing and Lumempouw (2024), the loss of morphological awareness among younger speakers corresponds directly to a decline in cultural knowledge expressed through linguistic form.

Recent sociolinguistic studies have further indicated that morphosyntactic erosion in local languages often begins with the reduction of bound morphemes and clitic systems (Marnix Foster & Welsh, 2023). In Mongondow, this trend manifests as an increasing reliance on analytic structures influenced by Indonesian syntax. Young speakers in urban Bolmong tend to prefer analytic constructions like *punya saya* (“mine”) instead of *-ku*, and *saya makan* instead of *ku-mangan*. This phenomenon reflects what Ratu (2023) calls “affixational interference,” where dominant-language structures infiltrate morphological boundaries of local languages. Yet, this interference is not merely degenerative—it also reveals adaptive creativity. In code-switching environments, speakers strategically mobilize Mongondow clitics to signal intimacy or authenticity, while defaulting to Indonesian forms for formal or bureaucratic settings. The morphosyntactic system thus becomes a sociolinguistic barometer of identity negotiation in real time.

From the perspective of linguistic ecology, the Mongondow pronominal system can be viewed as a *morphological ecosystem* sustained by continuous cultural input. Each pronominal form *aku*, *daku*, *ku-*, *-ku*, *kami*, *kita*, *beliau*, *mereka* functions not in isolation but in reciprocal relation with cultural concepts of hierarchy, kinship, and solidarity. The morphological distinction between inclusive (*kita*) and exclusive (*kami*) first-person plural pronouns, for example, encodes relational ethics that align with community-based social structures. These distinctions are not grammatical accidents but represent what Duranti (2015) calls *moral grammars of sociality*: linguistic systems that articulate ethical relationships. In Mongondow, the inclusive–exclusive opposition is central to maintaining social harmony, especially in collective discourse such as traditional ceremonies or communal decision-making.

Analyzing Mongondow morphosyntax through a preservationist lens also underscores the urgency of documentation and revitalization. Kaufman (2024) warns that within the Central Philippine cluster, languages with high morphological dependency those rich in affixation and cliticization are most vulnerable to simplification under dominant-language pressure. Once the morphological layer thins, the semantic precision and pragmatic range of pronouns decline, leading to what linguists term *grammatical attrition*. In the Mongondow case, this attrition could disrupt intergenerational transmission of social meaning encoded in pronouns. Therefore, revitalization strategies must focus not only on vocabulary enrichment but also on restoring morphosyntactic awareness particularly the use of bound morphemes that carry identity markers.

To visualize these relationships, the following conceptual diagram illustrates how morphosyntactic features interact with cultural and pragmatic dimensions in sustaining the Mongondow pronoun system:

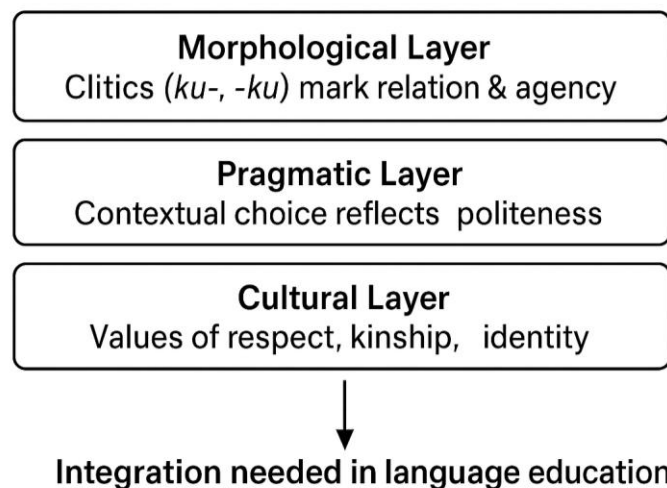


Diagram 2. Conceptual diagram proposed for morphology, pragmatics, and cultural identity

This framework suggests that morphological integrity in Mongondow functions as a carrier of social continuity. Each layer from morphology to pragmatics supports the community's linguistic identity. Once any layer weakens, the communicative ecosystem risks imbalance. As Kaufman (2024) and Ratu (2023) argue, such structural fragility must be addressed through deliberate pedagogical design and linguistic documentation. A promising approach would integrate morphosyntactic awareness into school curricula, emphasizing not only pronunciation and vocabulary but also morphological patterning as a reflection of cultural logic.

Finally, the morphosyntactic complexity of Mongondow pronouns is not a vestige of an older linguistic stage but a living structure that continues to mediate social meaning, identity, and interpersonal relationships. Preserving this complexity requires multidimensional efforts academic documentation, curriculum integration, and community engagement that treat morphology not as a mechanical system but as a cultural heritage in grammatical form. As current linguistic scholarship increasingly recognizes (Foster & Welsh, 2023; Kaufman, 2024; Ratu, 2023), the endurance of local languages like Mongondow depends less on lexical survival and more on the preservation of their morphosyntactic architectures. Hence, revitalization must move beyond words and return to the grammar of respect, agency, and belonging that Mongondow pronouns so eloquently encode.

CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth linguistic exploration of the *Mongondow pronomina persona*, highlighting how morphology, syntax, and pragmatics converge to form a culturally embedded grammatical system. The analysis reveals that Mongondow pronouns are not merely structural markers but also vehicles of sociocultural identity and communicative ethics. The presence of bound

morphemes such as *ku-* and *-ku* illustrates the continuity of morphological agency and possession, while the alternation between *aku* and *daku* reflects layered degrees of respect and formality. The findings also demonstrate that the inclusive and exclusive plural distinctions (*kita* vs. *kami*) maintain kinship and social harmony, which are integral to Mongondow community values. At the morphosyntactic level, the flexibility of clitic placement (*ku-mangan* vs. *mangan-ku*) underscores a dynamic discourse system sensitive to focus and emphasis. These patterns affirm Mongondow's typological affiliation with the Central Philippine language group yet also highlight its unique morphological resilience against external linguistic influence, particularly from Indonesian. Recent studies (Ratu, 2023; Zakaria, 2022; Kaufman, 2024) further support that the Mongondow language remains a crucial repository of local identity despite pressures of language shift.

From a broader perspective, this study demonstrates that understanding *pronomina persona* in Mongondow extends beyond grammatical description—it represents an entry point into the community's worldview, ethics, and intergenerational knowledge. Therefore, the preservation of Mongondow morphology and pronoun use is not simply a linguistic endeavor but a cultural imperative. The results call for revitalization strategies emphasizing the integration of local morphosyntactic awareness into language education, ensuring that the structural and cultural depth of Mongondow grammar endures in future generations. Future research should focus on comparative ethnopragmatic studies of Mongondow pronouns across dialects and generations to assess morphosyntactic change. Educational stakeholders are encouraged to develop curricula and teaching materials that explicitly incorporate clitic and affix usage, ensuring the preservation of Mongondow's cultural-linguistic heritage through community-based language pedagogy.

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