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THE USE OF THE ENCLITIC *-KA* IN MAKASSARESE SIMPLE SENTENCES: A SYNTACTIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract

The Makassar language is one of the regional languages of South Sulawesi that has a distinctive syntax characterized by the use of enclitics as grammatical markers between the subject and the verb in simple sentences. This study aims to analyze the use of the enclitic -ka in simple sentences in Makassarese language, as well as the distributional constraints of the enclitic -ka on certain verbs. This study employed a qualitative descriptive design. Data were collected from five native speakers of the Makassar language. Data collection was conducted through recorded interviews. The data were subsequently analyzed using a systematic framework consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study indicate that the enclitic -ka functions as the first-person singular subject in simple sentences in the Makassar language. However, not all verbs can be combined with the enclitic -ka. This finding confirms that the enclitic -ka is not an affix, but rather a bound subject that aligns with the typology of the Makassar language as a fronted predicate. This study contributes by enriching our understanding in the field of syntax regarding the use of the enclitic -ka as a marker of the first-person subject in simple sentences and encourages further research on complex sentences to investigate whether similar syntactic constraints also to apply.

Keywords: *Enclitics -ka; Makassarese language; syntactic analysis; simple sentences*

INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been increasing interest in the study of local and regional languages has been growing as part of efforts to preserve linguistic diversity and cultural heritage. Linguistics, particularly the branch of syntax, is a key factor in understanding how speakers of a language construct sentences to ensure messages are conveyed clearly. Syntax plays a crucial role because poorly structured sentences make it difficult to grasp grammatical meaning (Eliastuti et al., 2023). One of the interesting findings in typological syntax studies is clinics. Critics are grammatical elements divided into proclitics, which appear at the beginning of a word, and enclitics, which appear at the end of a word (Rasdana & Asnawi, 2023). In Indonesia, one regional language with unique syntactic characteristics regarding the use of enclitics is the Makassar language, which functions as a local language and a symbol of the cultural identity of the people of South Sulawesi (Ariyadi & Utomo, 2020).

As a language with a distinctive structure, the Makassar language uses enclitics to form simple sentences. One enclitic frequently found in everyday communication is the *-ka* enclitic. Many studies have examined how clitics are used in regional languages. Generally, the enclitic *-ka* is identified as functioning as a syntactic marker for the first-person singular subject (I) in certain sentence constructions, such as in the sentence *ammotorokka*, which

means 'I am riding a motorcycle'. However, the use of the enclitic -*ka* in the Makassar language is not unrestricted and cannot be attached to all verbs (kana gauk). Native speakers of the Makassar language clearly distinguish between constructions considered grammatical and those considered ungrammatical. For example, the form "ammotorokka" is syntactically acceptable, whereas forms like "*annganreka*" (I am eating) are considered rarely used in simple sentence structures. This restriction on distribution indicates the existence of syntactic rules governing how the enclitic -*ka* attaches to verbs (Sukardi et al., 2024).

According to Ardiansyah et al. (2021), affirmative sentences in the Makassar language generally begin with a verb followed by the subject. Abbas et al. (2022) reports that this first-person singular enclitic attaches to the end of the verb and functions syntactically as the subject in a VS (Verb-Subject) pattern. This demonstrates that in constructions such as *ammotorokka*, the verb *ammotorok* acts as the predicate while the enclitic -*ka* is the subject "I" that completes the structure into a simple sentence: "I am riding a motorcycle." However, Weda (2017) argues that the Makassar language has two simple sentence patterns, namely SVO and VSO. Although there is a difference in terminology where Jukes (2006) categorizes it as an absolute marker while Weda (2017) refers to it as a subject there is a commonality in that these enclitic forms a grammatical unit within the sentence. Jukes (2006) argues that this enclitic functions phonologically like an affix but can also fully convey meaning syntactically within a simple sentence. Overall, these studies indicate that the Makassar language is a head-marking language that marks the subject on the predicate through clitics. These findings suggest that the enclitic -*ka* functions not only as a pronoun but also as a syntactic component that determines the structure of the sentence.

Although studies on enclitics in regional languages have expanded in recent years, research on the usage and distributional constraints of the enclitic -*ka* with certain verbs in simple Makassar sentences remains limited. Few studies have examined how this enclitic interacts with verb types to form syntax in the Makassar language. The main limitation of previous studies has tended to focus on morphological aspects such as affixes. Consequently, although there have been many studies on the Makassarese language, the syntactic rules governing why certain verbs cannot be attached to the enclitic -*ka* in simple sentence constructions remain poorly understood. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting a study titled "The Use of the Enclitic -*ka* in Makassarese Simple Sentences: A Syntactic Analysis.

This study aims to analyze the use of the enclitic -*ka* as well as the distributional restrictions of the enclitic -*ka* on certain verbs in simple sentence structures in the Makassarese language.

Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to linguistic research, particularly in the field of Makassar syntax, by enhancing our understanding of the use of the enclitic -*ka* as a first-person subject marker in simple sentences. The findings of this study are also expected to serve as a reference for further research on enclitics and sentence structure in regional languages.

Practically, this study is expected to serve as a reference for students, researchers, and language educators in understanding simple sentence structure in the Makassar language, particularly regarding the use of the enclitic -*ka*. Furthermore, this study can be used as supporting material in efforts to preserve and teach the Makassar language, both in academic contexts and in culture-based learning.

Based on this background and the objectives, the researcher formulates two research questions: First, how is the enclitic *-ka* used in simple sentences in the Makassar language? Second, what are the distributional constraints of the enclitic *-ka* on certain verbs in simple sentence structures in the Makassar language?

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design aimed at investigating and syntactically analyzing the use of the enclitic *-ka* in simple sentences. The focus of this study is to gain an in-depth understanding from native speakers regarding their daily experiences in using the Makassar language, particularly the use of the enclitic *-ka* in simple sentences and the limitations of its use with certain verbs. The study population consisted of native speakers of the Makassar language living in Gowa and Takalar. The researcher used purposive sampling and selected a sample of 5 participants to elicit the use of the enclitic *-ka* in simple sentences. Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they are indeed native speakers, meaning they were born and reside in Makassar. Data were collected through interviews using open-ended questions that allowed the informants to speak naturally in accordance with the everyday context of the Makassar language.

This study was conducted by presenting simple sentences designed to encourage participants to use verbs accompanied by the enclitic *-ka*, as well as through a substitution test, which involved comparing sentences using the enclitic *-ka* with sentences using free pronouns such as *nakke* to observe differences in function and syntactic structure. Furthermore, the data were collected through interviews by recording the entire conversation using an audio recorder. The data were analyzed using a systematic framework consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles and Huberman 2014). Data condensation was performed by selecting and summarizing the interview recordings, focusing on syntactic analysis of simple sentences, basic elements, and the types of verbs with which the enclitic *-ka* is used in the Makassar language. The data were presented in tabular form to identify patterns emerging from the interview results. The final stage of the analysis involves drawing conclusions based on the usage patterns found in the data, including the use of the enclitic *-ka* in simple sentences, the limitations on the use of the enclitic *-ka* with certain verbs, and the tendency of speakers to omit the free pronoun *nakke* when the first-person subject is represented by the enclitic *-ka*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate the use of the enclitic *-ka* as the first-person subject in simple sentences in the Makassar language. In general, the findings indicate that the use of the enclitic *-ka* functions as a syntactic element that realizes a subject bound to the verb, rather than as an affix (Sudiyono et al., 2019). This finding is related to previous research by Sukardi (2024), who analyzed Makassar enclitic as aspect markers, emphasizing that enclitics in this language have a systematic and integrated grammatical role. In line with this, the results of this study show that the enclitic *-ka* also functions in the syntactic domain, specifically as the subject in simple sentences.

Typologically, the findings of this study align with the classification of the Makassar language as a language with a predominantly Predicate-Subject or Verb-Subject (V-S) word order (Jukes, 2006). This result supports previous research by Abbas et al. (2022), which states that enclitic forms attached to verbs reinforce this verb initial characteristic. However, this finding differs from Friberg (1996), who reported that in the Makassar language, the role of the subject, such as "I, "is determined by its position whether it functions as a prefix or suffix in a sentence and this rule applies to transitive sentences. Therefore, the results of this study not only enrich the syntactic description of the Makassar language but also reinforce previous typological findings and studies on enclitics. These findings are based on interview data, and the discussion is divided into several sections according to the focus of the analysis.

Verb Typology (*Kana Gauk)* that meets Enclitic *-ka*

This section discusses in detail the distribution of enclitic *-ka* based on verb type (*kana gauk*). Haspelmath (2023) distinguishes clitics from affixes based on word class: affixes are attached only to specific word classes (nouns, verbs, and adjectives), whereas clitics are not restricted to any particular word class.

Table 1. Verb Typology that Uses Enclitic *-ka*

No.	Simple Sentences	Basic Elements	Types of Verbs
1.	*Angngukirikka.*	*Angngukirik* + (*-ka)*	Transitive
2.	*Appilajarakka.*	*Appilajarak* + *(-ka)*	Transitive
3.	*Accinikka.*	*Accinik + (-ka)*	Transitive
4.	*Apparekka.*	*Apparek +(-ka)*	Transitive
5.	*Assassakka.*	*Assassak + (-ka)*	Transitive
6.	*Ammotorokka.*	*Ammotorok + (-ka)*	Intransitive
7.	*Aklumpakka.*	*Aklumpak* + *(-ka)*	Intransitive

Table 1 show that simple sentences in the Makassar language consist of a verb as the initial predicate and the enclitic *-ka* as the first-person singular subject. The structure in this data involves the direct attachment of the subject enclitic to the verb, rather than appearing as a free noun phrase. This pattern consistently shows that construction using the enclitic *-ka* follow the Verb-Subject order, consistent with the typology of the Makassar language as a front-predicate language. Bresnan (2023) argues that English pronominal object enclitics such as 'em, 'im, and 'er are syntactically independent of their verbs, yet together they form a single lexical unit. For example: Give 'em the book (Give them the book), I saw 'im (I saw him), and Call 'er back (Call her back).

Although both are attached to the end of the verb, English enclitics and the *-ka* enclitic in the Makassar language have differences. The enclitics 'em, 'im, and 'er function as object markers, whereas *-ka* functions as a first-person singular subject marker.

Syntactic Analysis of Simple Sentences

This analysis focuses on the structure of simple sentences, which are constructions consisting of a single verb as the predicate and a single subject. In the Makassar language, the first-person singular subject is expressed using the enclitic *-ka*, which means 'I'. Ardiansyah et al. (2021) found that affirmative sentences in the Makassar language generally begin with a predicate (P), followed by a subject (S), whereas English sentences begin with a subject (S), followed by a predicate (P). This finding supports the **syntactic analysis below**, which shows that simple sentence structures such as angngukirikka, appilajarakka, accinikka, apparekka, assassakka, ammotorokka, and aklumpakka follow the V + S pattern (predicate precedes subject), with the enclitic *-ka* functioning as the subject after the verb.

Syntactic Analysis *of Angngukirikka*

Angngukirik *-ka* 'I am writing'.

V S

In this structure, the enclitic *-ka* functions as the first-person singular subject. This analysis is limited to the verb-subject relation in accordance with the characteristics of simple sentences, without addressing objects or other syntactic elements.

Thus, this structural analysis confirms that the enclitic *-ka* is the subject in simple sentences in the Makassar language, not a verb affix, and functions as the subject (Abbas et al., 2022).

Syntactic Analysis of *Appilajarakka*

Appilajarak *-ka* 'I am studying'.

V S

A syntactic analysis of the *appilajarakka* construction reveals a sentence pattern in which the verb is placed at the beginning, followed by the subject. Within this structure, the verb *apppilajarak* functions as an initial predicate, signifying the act of learning. Meanwhile, the subject cannot stand alone but is followed by the first-person singular marker, namely the enclitic *-ka*, which indicates that *appilajarakka* has met the syntactic requirements of the sentence. Although the verb used is transitive or requires an object, this subject enclitic already fulfills an important part of the sentence structure.

Syntactic Analysis of *Accinikka*

Accinik *-ka* 'I am looking'.

V S

A syntactic analysis of the *accinikka* form shows that the verb and subject are linked within a single structure. In this sentence, the verb *accinik*, meaning 'to see', functions as the verb. Meanwhile, the subject is marked by the enlitic *-ka,* which indicates the first-person singular 'I' and is attached to the end of the verb.

Syntactic Analysis of *Apparekka*

Apparek -*ka* 'I am making'.
V S

A syntactic analysis of the simple sentence *apparekka* shows that the enclitic -*ka* functions as the subject. In this structure, the verb *apparek* serves as the action verb, so the sentence consists of the enclitic subject -*ka* and *apparek* as the verb, meaning that the simple sentence conveys a complete meaning.

Syntactic Analysis of *Assassakka*

Assassak -*ka* 'I am washing'.
V S

A syntactic analysis of the *assassakka* construction in this structure reveals that the verb *assassak*, meaning 'to wash,' functions as the main verb. The subject here is the enclitic -ka, which acts as the first-person singular subject and is attached to the end of the verb. This combination pattern indicates a simple sentence structure. The sentence *assassakka* has taken the form of a grammatically complete and clear sentence.

Syntactic Analysis of *Ammotorokka*

Ammotorok -*ka* 'I am riding a motorcycle'.
V S

This construction indicates that the sentence is syntactically complete. The enclitic -*ka* functions as the first-person subject, acting as the agent, while *ammotorok* is the action (verb) in this simple sentence.

Syntactic Analysis of *Aklumpakka*

Aklumpak -*ka* 'I am Jumping'.
V S

A syntactic analysis of the *aklumpakka* in this sentence structure shows that the verb *aklumpak* meaning 'to jump,' functions as the verb in the sentence. Although this verb is transitive that is, a type of verb that does not require an object the enclitic -ka is used at the end of the verb to form the subject of the sentence. This indicates that the rule for using the enclitic -ka as a subject with a verb can form simple sentences in Makassare regardless of whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. The use of the enclitic -ka at the end of the verb *aklumpak* has a complete meaning in forming a sentence.

Transitive Verbs (Verb + Subject)

Based on Table 1, transitive verbs that use the enclitic -*ka* form simple sentences with the Verb + Subject pattern, where the enclitic -*ka* functions as the pronoun 'I'. Thus, simple sentences such as *angngukirikka, appilajarakka, accinikka, apparekka, and assassakka* are understood as simple sentences expressing 'I am writing, 'I am studying', 'I am looking', 'I am making', and 'I am washing'. One example of transitive verb is *angngukirikka sura'*, the element angngukirik functions as the verb, while -*ka* 'I' syntactically indicates the first-person singular subject. *Sura'* functions as the object of the verb angngukirikka to clarify the transitive nature of the verb. Example in English: I am writing a letter.

This is consistent with the findings of Abbas et al. (2022) that the enclitic *-ak* is attached to the end of the verb *ammalli* as the subject, and *bokbok* (book) as the object following the verb + enclitic.

Example:

Ammalli<u>ak</u> bokbok

Structure: V + S + O

"I buy a book"

Intransitive Verbs (Verb + Subject)

Based on Table 1, in addition to transitive verbs, the data also shows that intransitive verbs can form simple sentences with the enclitic *-ka,* which means 'I'. Simple sentences such as *ammotorokka* and *aklumpakka* consist of an intransitive verb as the initial predicate followed by the enclitic *-ka* 'I' as the first-person subject. In the construction *ammotorokka,* the verb *ammotorok* expresses the action, while *-ka* 'I' functions as the subject.

This is consistent with Wu et al. (2023), who reported that even intransitive verbs in English do not require an object to form a complete sentence, such as "the baby sleeps." Consequently, in both English and the Makassar language, intransitive verbs universally do not require an object and already form complete sentences consisting of a subject and a verb.

Verbs that Cannot be Combined with the Enclitic *-ka*

This finding indicates that the use of the enclitic *-ka* in the Makassar language is not free but is subject to certain syntactic constraints. The enclitic *-ka* can only appear in sentence constructions that provide a structural position for a bound subject (Zingler, 2022). Thus, the exclusion of the enclitic *-ka* with certain verbs is a syntactic phenomenon related to the internal structure of simple sentences.

There are verbs *(kana gauk)* that specifically cannot be combined with the enclitic *-ka* in simple sentences in the Makassar language. The analysis in this section is syntactic, focusing on simple sentence structure and subject-predicate relations.

Based on interview data, it was found that a number of verbs were rejected by informants when paired with the enclitic *-ka* namely: *akkelonga* 'I am singing', *ammempoa* 'I am sitting', *ammentengnga* 'I am standing, *aklampaya* 'I am leaving', *angnganrea* 'I am eating', *asselanga* 'I am diving', and *aklangea* 'I am swimming'. This rejection is due to the incompatibility of these verbs with the enclitic *-ka*.

For example, the form angnganrea 'I am eating' represents a predicate with a subject in a simple sentence structure. The same applies to *akkelonga and ammentengnga,* which syntactically form simple sentences, except that both are not pronounced as *akkelongka* (cannot be paired with the enclitic *-ka*) but rather as *akkelonga.*

Differences between *Appilajarakka*, *Nakke appilajarak*, and *Appilajarak*

Appilajarakkka

This construction consists of a verb + a subject marker. Appilajarakka is a simple sentence. Appilajarak is the verb ‘to learn' and the enlitic *-ka* is the subject ‘I'. So, it means ‘I am studying. ‘

Nakke appilajarak

This structure uses a free pronoun. This sentence is longer and is typically used for emphasi or to clarify the subject's identity.

The difference between *appilajaraka* (VS) and *nakke appilajarak* (SV) aligns with the findings of Aini et al. (2026) that subject clitics attached to verbs produce constructions that emphasize the action, whereas free pronouns at the beginning of the sentence shift the focus to the agent. This indicates that similar patterns are also found in other Austronesian languages in Indonesia, so this is not a feature unique to the Makassar language.

Appilajarak

This sentence is ambiguous because the subject is not explicitly stated or bound, so it cannot yet be considered a sentence. *Appilajarak* is the verb, and to form a simple sentence, a subject is required.

The results highlight the need for syntactic analysis, which shows that *-ka* is neither a derivational not an inflectional suffix morpheme (morphology), but rather an enclitic (Abbas et al., 2022). This enclitic functions as the subject in simple Makassarese sentences. As a marker for the first-person singular (I), the enclitic *-ka* plays a syntactic role in simple Makassarese sentences. This enclitic is placed at the end of the verb, forming the Verb + Subject *(-ka)* pattern. The verb and *-ka* here indicate that this is a syntactic construction, not a morphological word-formation process. This is evidenced by the fact that the use of the enclitic *-ka* is not influenced by the type of verb it attaches to; whether the verb is transitive or intransitive, the enclitic *-ka* still functions as a subject marker in forming simple sentence in the Makassar language. Furthermore, the use of the first-person singular subject does not require a free personal pronoun like the word *nakke* instead, it is sufficient to use the enclitic *-ka* attached to the verb.

This structure shows that the subject in the Makassar language can be used directly by attaching it to the verb via an enclitic. According to Sukardi et al. (2024), enclitics in Makassar play an important role in conveying grammatical information within sentences. A comparison with other sentences clarifies this usage:

La mange<u>ak</u> akbalanja ri pasaraka.

‘I am going shopping at the market’ (Mustafa, 2020). In the example above, *mangeak* follows the same patterns as *ammotorokka*, namely verb + enclitic *-ka/-ak* as the subject. The

word *ammotorokka*, consisting only of a verb and an enclitic, can already stand as a sentence with complete meaning in the Makassar language. This differs from Indonesian, which requires an explicit subject. This indicates that the Makassar language is a pro-drop language, meaning it allows the subject to be omitted because it is already represented by the enclitic attached to the verb (Mustafa, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis and discussion, it can be concluded that the use of the enclitic -ka in the Makassar language as a marker of the first-person singular subject (I), which is syntactically attached to the verb, forms a simple sentence. The enclitic -ka is not a verbal affix or merely an abbreviation of the free pronoun nakke, but rather a subject that fulfills a primary role in the sentence structure.

The use of the enclitic -ka indicates consistency in constructions following the Verb-Subject pattern (Verb + -ka), for both transitive and intransitive verbs. This finding suggests that the subject in the Makassar language is not always realized as a free noun phrase, but can be realized through an enclitic attached to the verb as an initial predicate.

Furthermore, this study found that not all verbs can be paired with the enclitic -ka. The restriction on the attachment of -ka to certain verbs is due to a syntactic constraint, namely the fact that the bound subject has no structural position in the construction. This confirms that the use of the enclitic -ka follows systematic syntactic rules, rather than being based solely on semantic factors or speaker habits.

The implications of these findings include several key points. First, this study provides a clearer understanding of the use of the enclitic -ka as a bound and systematic first-person singular subject marker in the Makassar language, thereby enriching the grammatical description of that language. Second, these findings strengthen studies in language typology, particularly regarding early predicate languages, and demonstrate that a qualitative descriptive syntactic approach based on native speaker data is effective as a reference for further research on other regional languages with similar phenomena. Third, practically, the results of this study contribute to the development of more accurate teaching and learning materials for the Makassar language, while also supporting efforts to document and preserve regional languages through the presentation of systematic and meaningful linguistic descriptions.

Future researchers may conduct further studies to expand the analysis of other enclitics in the Makassar language, in order to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the bound pronoun system. Additionally, future research could analyze complex sentences to determine whether the same syntactic constraints apply in more complex contexts. For teachers and practitioners of regional languages, the results of this syntactic analysis are expected to serve as a reference for teaching Makassar grammar using contextual and scientific sentence structures.

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