



# Verbal Clauses in the Lamaholot Language, Lewoawan Dialect: A Morphosyntactic-Typological Study

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## Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengkaji proses perubahan verba, struktur dasar klausa verba, serta aspek tipologi klausa verbal BLDL sebagai bagian dari kajian Tipologi Morfosintaksis. Data penelitian deskriptif kualitatif ini bersumber dari percakapan sehari-hari masyarakat desa Lewoawan. Teknik pengumpulan data berupa simak bebas libat cakap, rekam dan catat. Data dianalisis melalui reduksi, penyajian dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa (1) secara sintaksis verba BLDL terdiri atas verba intransitif dan transitif, (2) secara morfologis verba tidak utuh BLDL membutuhkan pelekatan klitik serta pemarkah verba yang disesuaikan dengan pronomina subjek kalimat, (3) struktur dasar klausa verbal BLDL adalah klausa intransitif, monotransitif dan dwitransitif, (4) tipologi tata urutan kata pada klausa verba BLDL adalah SV pada klausa intransitif, SVO pada klausa monotransitif, dan SVOO pada klausa dwitransitif, (5) secara tipologi gramatikal BLDL termasuk Bahasa Aktif yakni memperlakukan A sama dengan S dan sama dengan P.

**Kata Kunci:** dialek lewoawan, bahasa lamaholot, klausa verba, tipologi morfosintaksis

## Abstract

*This research examines verb change process, verb clause's basic structure, and the typology aspects of BLDL verbal clauses as part of the Morphosyntactic Typology study. The data of this qualitative descriptive research comes from daily conversations of the Lewoawan village community. Data collection techniques include free-involved listening-speaking, recording and taking notes. The data were analyzed by reducing, presenting and drawing conclusions. The results show that (1) syntactically BLDL verbs consist of intransitive and transitive verbs, (2) morphologically BLDL incomplete verbs require the attachment of clitics and verb markers that are adjusted to the sentence's subject pronoun, (3) the basic structures of BLDL verbal clauses are intransitive, mono-transitive and ditransitive, (4) the typology of word order in BLDL verb clauses is SV in intransitive, SVO in mono-transitive and SVOO in ditransitive, (5) grammatically typologically BLDL is an Active Language, namely treating A the same as S and the same as P.*

**Keywords:** lewoawan dialect, lamaholot language, verbal clause, morphosyntactic typology

## Introduction

Linguistic typology compares languages across the world to determine linguistic universals and to examine the distinctive patterns of languages for the purpose of classification or grouping. These groupings are based on genealogical (language lineage), geographical location, and structural or grammatical features. One of the aspects

examined based on structure is the morphosyntactic aspect

Mallinson and Blake (as cited in Rendi et al., 2012) state that morphosyntactic typology of language involves several elements: agent and patient marking, word order, coordination (conjunction reduction), and subordination (relative clauses). Agent and patient marking

and word order are aspects related to simple sentences, while coordination (through conjunction reduction) and subordination with relative clauses relate to complex sentences. Based on these sentence structure aspects, Comrie and Artawa (as cited in Netra et al., 2008) classify languages into three groups: ergative-accusative languages, passive languages, and active-antipassive languages. A language is considered ergative if the patient (P) of a transitive verb is treated the same as or is coreferential with the subject (S) of an intransitive clause, and differently from the agent (A) of a transitive verb. Ergative languages treat P and S similarly—usually both are unmarked. In accusative languages, A and S are treated similarly, while P is treated differently. Meanwhile, active-type languages are those in which one group of S behaves like P, and another group of S behaves like A within the same language.

Lamaholot is one of the languages that, in general, shares structural features with other languages of the world. However, beyond these universal traits, Lamaholot also exhibits unique characteristics that distinguish it from other languages. According to Keraf (1978, as cited in Weking et al., 2018), Lamaholot has three dialect groups: Western Lamaholot, Eastern Lamaholot, and Central Lamaholot. Later, Keraf (1991, as cited in Lein & Siahaan, 2020) further divided these into 35 specific dialects: Lamalera, Mulan, Ile Ape, Belang, Lewotala, Imulolo, Lewuka, Kalikasa, Lewokukun, Mingar, Wuakerong, Lewopenutu, Lamahora, Merdeka, Lewoeleng, Lamatuka, Atawolo, Kedang, Kiwang Ona, Dulhi, Watan, Horowura, Botun, Waiwadan, Lamakera, Ritaebang, Lewolema, Baipito, Waibalun, Bama, Lewolaga, Tanjung, Lewotobi, Pakuunu, and Hewa. Lewoawan dialect is part of the Lewotobi dialect group and is spoken by people living in Lewoawan Village.

The Lamaholot Language of the Lewoawan Dialect (LLD) possesses unique features that set it apart from other languages. This can be observed in verbal clauses, which include the process of verb transformation, the basic structure of verbal clauses, and the typology of verbal clauses. Based on this, the research addresses the following core problems: (1) How does the process of verb transformation occur in LLD?

(2) What is the basic structure of verbal clauses in LLD?

(3) What are the typological aspects of verbal clauses in LLD?

This study aims to address these issues as an effort to preserve Lamaholot as a language that not only embodies linguistic universals but also exhibits distinctive features. Additionally, this research can serve as a foundation for other researchers to investigate various linguistic aspects further.

## Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive method with a morphosyntactic typology approach. The research data were sourced from daily conversations of the Lewoawan villagers, located in Ilebura District, East Flores Regency. The data collection techniques involved non-participant observation, recording, and note-taking to capture natural linguistic expressions from the native speakers.

After the data were collected, they were analyzed through a qualitative process involving three stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. These stages were carried out systematically to identify patterns in verb changes, clause structures, and typological features within verbal clauses in the Lewoawan dialect of Lamaholot.

The final analysis results were then described in detail to answer the research problems: (1) the process of verb changes in BLDL, (2) the basic structure of verbal clauses in BLDL, and (3) the typological aspects of verbal clauses in BLDL. This methodological approach was chosen to highlight both the universal features and the unique linguistic traits found in the Lewoawan dialect.

## Result and Discussion

## Verbs in BLDL

Syntactically, verbs in BLDL can be classified into two types: intransitive and transitive verbs. Transitive verbs are further divided into monotransitive and ditransitive verbs. As a core element in a clause, verbs require the presence of one or more arguments. Accordingly, these verb types are categorized based on their valency: **intransitive verbs** (one-place predicates) require only one core argument (SUBJ), **monotransitive verbs** (two-place predicates) require two core arguments (SUBJ and OBJ), and **ditransitive verbs** (three-place predicates) require three or more core arguments (SUBJ, OBJ1, and OBJ2) in a sentence (Verhaar, 2012 in Soares, 2016).

The syntactic types of verbs in BLDL can be seen in the utterances below:

1. Intransitive Verbs
  - a. *Go kai ke*  
Go k –ai ke'en man kai.  
1SG 1SG go to garden verb marker  
I went to the garden.
  - b. *Na behine sega*  
3SG just arrived  
He/she just arrived.
2. Monotransitive/One-place Transitive Verbs
  - a. *Kame medi oru tehe*  
1PL.HON PROG harvest rice  
We are harvesting rice.
  - b. *Bapa pe'en belo kajo.*  
3SG DEM cut wood  
That man cut wood.
3. Ditransitive Verbs
  - a. *Eme soron kebare pe'en kewate to'u*  
Mother 3SG gave girl 3SG DEM sarong one DET  
Mother gave that girl a sarong.
  - b. *Ra maje go Ba' Raja*  
They 3PL call me Father King  
They called me Father King.

The table below presents the classification of verbs based on syntactic types.

Verba intransitive		Verba monotransitif		Verba dwitransitif	
<i>Tobo</i>	'duduk'	<i>-ene</i>	'menganyam'	<i>Majen</i>	'memanggil'
<i>Dei</i>	'berdiri'	<i>-ete</i>	'membawa'	<i>Soron/Ni</i>	'memberikan'
<i>Pla'e</i>	'berlari'	<i>Hope</i>	'membeli'	<i>Genan</i>	'meninggalkan'
<i>Pana</i>	'berjalan'	<i>Du'u</i>	'menjual'	<i>Mari</i>	'mengatakan'
<i>Kuma</i>	'menguning'	<i>Suka</i>	'menyukai'		
<i>-ai</i>	'pergi'	<i>Pete</i>	'memotong'		
<i>Sega</i>	'datang'	<i>-oi</i>	'mengetahui'		
<i>Ba'</i>	'mengalir'	<i>Bengo</i>	'memukul'		
<i>Niu</i>	'menggonggong'	<i>Noto</i>	'melihat'		
<i>Tawa</i>	'tumbuh'	<i>Seba</i>	'mencari'		
<i>Gaka</i>	'menangis'	<i>Pui</i>	'mengikat'		
<i>Geka</i>	'tertawa'	<i>Beka</i>	'menimbah'		
<i>nado</i>	'mengangguk'	<i>Bajo</i>	'menumbuk'		
<i>Gewali</i>	'pulang'	<i>-ewe</i>	'memetik'		
<i>Lenga</i>	'jatuh'	<i>Sika/Mula</i>	'menanam'		
<i>Geboran</i>	'berteriak'	<i>Koda</i>	'berbicara'		

## Verb Alternation Process in BLDL

Lein et al. (2022) stated that verbs in the Lamaholot language of the Lewokluok dialect exhibit two morphological forms: (1) verbs that can stand independently (full verbs), and (2) verbs that cannot stand alone (non-full verbs), which therefore require the attachment of clitics. Furthermore, it is noted that clitics in the Lamaholot Lewokluok dialect come in two forms that consistently adapt to pronominal references: proclitics and enclitics. This phenomenon is similarly observed in BLDL.

Verb alternation in BLDL is primarily caused by clitic attachment, a process referred to as cliticization, which aims to refine or complete the verb's meaning within a clause. However, a distinctive feature of BLDL, as compared to the Lewokluok dialect, lies in the presence of verb markers that align with the subject of the clause. Such subject-based verb marking is not found in the Lewokluok dialect.

The utterances below illustrate examples of verb alternation in BLDL:

a. *Go ka'i ke'en pasar kai*  
Go k-a'i ke'en pasar kai  
1SG 1SG-go to market verb marker (aligned with subject)  
I went to the market.

b. *Na n-a'i ke'en pasar nai*  
3SG 3SG-go to market verb marker (aligned

with subject)  
He/She went to the market.

## Basic Structure of Intransitive Verbal Clauses in BLDL

In BLDL, intransitive clauses and intransitive verbs are closely interrelated and inseparable, as both require only one core argument in a clause structure.

Verhaar (2010, in Tanjung, 2017) explains that, semantically, intransitive verbs used as predicates in intransitive clauses fall into two categories: experiencer verbs and action verbs. *Experiencer verbs* convey psychological or experiential meanings, while *action verbs* express physical actions. The single core argument in a clause with an experiencer verb assumes the experiencer role, while in a clause with an action verb, the core argument takes the agent role. From a grammatical standpoint, this single argument always functions as the subject of the clause.

The following utterances in BLDL exemplify this structure:

a. *Na geboran ku'a tame*  
3SG shout very loud  
He/She shouted very loudly.

b. *Ra tei ia man*  
3PL stay in garden  
They live in the garden.

Each of the above clauses contains only one core argument: *na* 'he/she' in (9), and *ra* 'they' in (10). This structure is due to the presence of intransitive verbs: *geboran* 'to shout' in clause (9) and *tei* 'to stay' in clause (10).

Structurally, based on the data, the verb in each clause appears to the right of the core argument, or follows the subject. In clause (9), the verb *geboran* follows *na*, and in

clause (10), the verb *tei* follows *ra*. This structure demonstrates a **Subject-Verb (SV)** word order typical of intransitive clauses in BLDL.

(Diagram 1. Basic Structure of Intransitive Verbal Clause in BLDL)

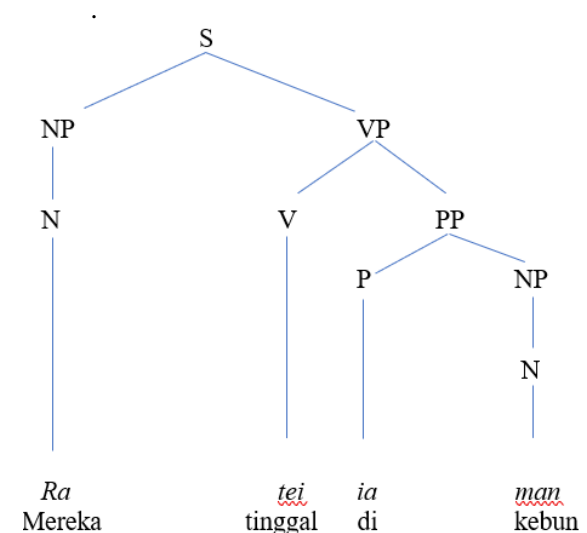


Diagram 1. Basic Structure of Intransitive Verbal Clause in BLDL

## 2. Basic Structure of Monotransitive (One-Place Transitive) Verbal Clauses

Monotransitive clauses are those in which the predicate verb requires two core arguments. These two arguments are governed by the verb and play thematic roles as actor and undergoer (Foley & Van Valin, 1984 in Lestari & Mulyadi, 2023). In BLDL, monotransitive clauses feature predicates (verbs) that obligatorily take two arguments. This structure is evident in the following utterances:

a. *Kame lera' wawe utan*  
We 1PL.HON hunt wild boar  
We hunt wild boar.

- b. *Kebare pe'en seba kajo ape*  
Girl (pronominal) DEM search firewood  
The girl searched for firewood.

Each clause above contains a single verb—*lera'* ('to hunt') in (11) and *seba* ('to search') in (12). Both verbs require the presence of two arguments. The verb *lera'* is associated with the arguments *kame* ('we') and *wawe utan* ('wild boar'), while the verb *seba* is associated with *kebare pe'en* ('that girl') and *kajo ape* ('firewood').

Structurally, in both clauses, the verb is placed after the first argument (subject) and before the second argument (object). In clause (11), the verb *lera'* appears between *kame* and *wawe utan*, and in clause (12), *seba* appears between *kebare pe'en* and *kajo ape*. This structure reflects a Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order.

(Diagram 2. Basic Structure of Monotransitive Verbal Clause in BLDL)

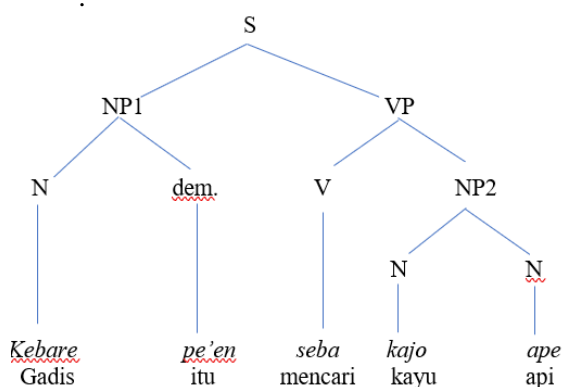


Diagram 2. Struktur Dasar Klausa Verba Monotransitif BLDL

## Verbal Clauses

A ditransitive clause is a clause construction in which the verb requires the presence of three arguments. According to the semantic roles, the first argument, the subject, functions as the Agent; the first object functions as the Goal; and the second object serves as the Theme (Bresnan, 2001 in Kale et al., 2022). BLDL also demonstrates this

type of clause structure, as seen in the following utterances:

- a. *Na ni go wata'metu*  
3SG give 1SG corn snack (a traditional food of East Flores)  
He/She gave me corn snack.

- b. *Ra genan go nuranewa*  
3PL leave 1SG land/garden  
They left me land/garden.

The verbs in both of the above clauses require three arguments. The verb *ni* ('to give') takes the arguments *na* ('he/she'), *go* ('me'), and *wata'metu* ('corn snack'). Similarly, the verb *genan* ('to leave behind') takes *ra* ('they'), *go* ('me'), and *nuranewa* ('land/garden'). Each verb, therefore, involves three arguments because it is a ditransitive verb.

Based on the data above, it can be concluded that the verb in each clause is positioned between the first argument (subject) and the second argument (first object). The verb *ni* is located between *na* and *go* in (13), and *genan* is situated between *ra* and *go* in (14). This shows a Subject-Verb-Object1-Object2 (SVOO) structure typical of ditransitive clauses in BLDL.

(Diagram 3. Basic Structure of Ditransitive Verbal Clause in BLDL)

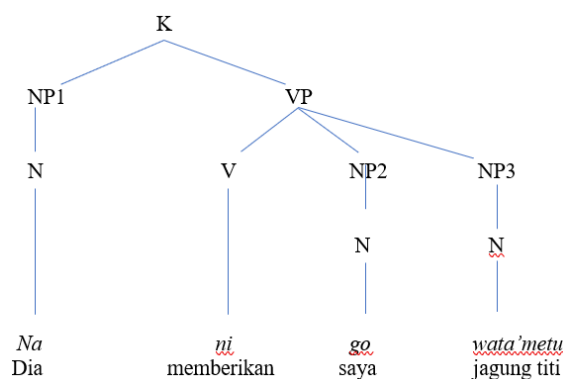


Diagram 3. Struktur Dasar Klausa Verba Dwitransitif BLDL

## Typology of Verbal Clauses

Greenberg's theory suggests that, universally, clause structure consists of three core elements: Subject, Verb, and Object, abbreviated as SVO. There are six possible word order patterns across the world's languages: SOV, SVO, VSO, VOS, OVS, and OSV. It is also possible for a language to exhibit more than one of these word order types in its clauses or sentences (Artawa & Jufrizal, 2018 in Lamawato, 2024). The word order typology in BLDL can be described as follows:

### a. Intransitive Clauses

Examples:

- *Na geboran ku'a tame* → S–V  
(He/she shouted very loudly.)
- *Ra tei ia man* → S–V  
(They live in the garden.)

Although various permutations are possible, the natural and grammatically preferred structure in BLDL is Subject–Verb (SV). For example, in (15a), the verb *geboran* follows the subject *na*, and in (16a), the verb *tei* follows the subject *ra*. Both reflect the typical SV order in intransitive clauses.

### b. Monotransitive/One-Place Transitive Clauses

Examples:

- *Kame lera' wawe utan* → S–V–O  
(We hunt wild boar.)
- *Kebare pe'en seba kajo ape* → S–V–O  
(The girl searched for firewood.)

In these examples, the verb is preceded by the subject and followed by the object, resulting in an SVO pattern. In (17a), *lera'* is positioned between the subject *kame* and object *wawe utan*, while in (18a), *seba* follows *kebare pe'en* and precedes *kajo ape*.

### c. Ditransitive Clauses

Examples:

- *Na ni go wata'metu* → S–V–O1–O2  
(He/she gave me corn snack.)
- *Ra genan go nuranewa* → S–V–O1–O2  
(They left me land/garden.)

In ditransitive clauses, the verb appears between the subject and the direct object, and the indirect object follows the direct object. For instance, in (19a), the verb *ni* is placed between *na* and *go*, and the indirect object *wata'metu* follows. Likewise, in (20a), *genan* follows *ra* and precedes *go*, with *nuranewa* at the end. This structure is typical of an SVOO word order.

From a syntactic perspective, language typology is closely linked to grammatical alignment systems. Dixon (in Desma & Mulyadi, 2022) defines grammatical alignment as the typological tendency of languages to associate grammatical roles either within a clause or across clauses. These alignments are commonly expressed in the following patterns:

- S = A ≠ P (Accusative)
- S = P ≠ A (Ergative)
- Sa = A, Sp = P (Active–Stative)

Where:

- S is the subject of an intransitive clause
- A is the subject (agent) of a transitive clause
- P is the object (patient) of a transitive clause

In BLDL, the grammatical alignment is evident in the examples below:

- *Na behine sega* (S) → (He/she just arrived.)
- *Na seba kajo ape* (A) → (He/she searched for firewood.)

- *Go ni na wata'metu* (P) → (*He/she gave me corn snack.*)
- *Go k-ai ke'en man kai* (S) → (*I went to the garden.*)
- *Ra genan go nuranewa* (P) → (*They left me land.*)

In the data above, the argument *S* in (21a) behaves the same as *A* in (21b) and *P* in (21c). Similarly, *A* in (22b) aligns with *S* in (22a) and *P* in (22c). Moreover, the pronouns *na* ('he/she') and *go* ('I') do not undergo any morphological changes as they shift between subject and object positions. This indicates that  $S = A = P$ . Therefore, based on this linguistic phenomenon, it can be concluded that BLDL employs an active alignment system, making it an Active-type language from a grammatical typology perspective.

## Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, several conclusions can be drawn. First, syntactically, verbs in the Lamaholot Language of the Lewoawan Dialect (BLDL) are divided into two main types: intransitive and transitive verbs. Transitive verbs are further classified into monotransitive and ditransitive verbs based on the number of arguments they require.

Second, morphologically, BLDL verbs consist of free-standing verbs (complete verbs) and non-free-standing verbs (incomplete verbs). The incomplete verbs require the attachment of clitics, which must align with the pronominal subject of the clause. In addition to clitics, BLDL also uses verb markers that correspond to the subject of the clause to complete the meaning of the verb.

Third, the basic structures of verbal clauses in BLDL include intransitive, monotransitive, and ditransitive constructions. These structures reflect the number and type of core arguments required by the verbs.

Fourth, in terms of word order typology, BLDL shows a consistent pattern: SV for intransitive clauses, SVO for monotransitive clauses, and SVOO for ditransitive clauses. The verb always appears after the subject and, in the case of transitive constructions, before one or two objects depending on the clause type.

Fifth, from a grammatical typology perspective, BLDL belongs to the Active language type, where the subject of an intransitive clause (*S*) is treated the same as both the agent (*A*) and the patient (*P*) of a transitive clause. This alignment is reflected in the consistent morphological form of the arguments across syntactic roles.



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