

## Phrase Formation and *Bahasa Alay*

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In the Minimalist Approach (Chomsky 1995, 1998; Radford 1997, 2009), it was demonstrated that words are combined together to form phrases of various types (e.g. verb phrase, prepositional phrase, tense phrase, complementizer phrase, etc.) by a series of binary merger operations and the resulting structures are usually represented in the form of tree diagrams. In other words, the merger operation works by selecting words from the mental lexicon and then they are merged together to form syntactic structures. This type of operation is different from the one proposed in the Transformational Grammar (TG) versions developed by Chomsky and his followers in 1960s and 1970s, in which the syntactic structure is built first before the Lexical Insertion Rule inserts lexical items under the syntactic nodes. In this paper, I would like to demonstrate that the TG-type operation, rather than the merger operation, provides a better account for phrase formation in the so-called *Bahasa Alay*, a communication system developed and used by the Indonesian-speaking teenagers when communicating via text messages and facebook. One striking characteristic of this communication system is that its words consist of a mixture of alphabets and numbers (e.g. *N4nt1 50re ud 4d4 4cr4 g4?* “Do you have something to do this late afternoon?”).