

## Morphological Analysis of Prefixes in the Makasae Language

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### Abstract

This study examines the morphological processes in the Makasae language, focusing on the use of prefixes 'Au'- and 'Tuli'- to form adjectives and verbs. Makasae, a language spoken primarily in East Timor, belongs to the Trans-New Guinea language family and features a rich system of affixation. The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach to analyze data collected through elicitation tasks and sentence construction with native speakers. The study examines how the prefix 'Au'- attaches to various root words to create descriptive adjectives, while 'Tuli'- combines with verb roots to form dynamic and forceful action verbs. The findings highlight the productivity and regularity of these prefixes in shaping Makasae's verbal and adjectival morphology. 'Au'- is found to serve as an adjectivizing tool, whereas 'Tuli'- contributes to the formation of action-oriented verbs with a sense of intensity or aggression. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of Makasae's affixation system and its role in the broader context of Trans-New Guinea linguistics. Further research is recommended to explore additional morphological processes and regional variations in the use of these affixes.

**Keywords:** Makasae Language, Prefixation, Au-Prefix, Tuli-Prefix and Morphological Analysis

### Introduction

Makasae is a language spoken primarily in East Timor (Timor-Leste), an island nation in Southeast Asia. The language is mainly used in the eastern regions of the country, particularly in the regencies of Baucau, Viqueque, and Lospalos. Makasae belongs to the Trans-New Guinea language family, which is predominantly found in Papua New Guinea and surrounding areas, making it unique among the languages spoken in Timor-Leste (Holton, 2007). As of the most recent estimates, the number of native speakers of Makasae is approximately 100,000. While Makasae is not the most widely spoken language in Timor-Leste, it holds significant cultural value for the communities in its region. Despite the growing influence of the official languages, Tetum and Portuguese, Makasae continues to be an important part of daily communication, traditional rituals, and cultural practices (Simões, 2013).

Makasae features a rich system of affixation, primarily characterized by the use of prefixes and infixes. These affixes are crucial in conveying grammatical functions such as tense, aspect, mood, and possession. Unlike some other languages in the Trans-New Guinea family, Makasae does not extensively use suffixes or circumfixes. The language's morphological structure allows for the creation of

complex verbal and nominal forms through the addition of these affixes, enabling speakers to express a variety of meanings by modifying root words.

Understanding Makasae's phonology, syntax, and affixation system is essential for documenting and preserving its linguistic heritage (Nugraha, 2024). This study aims to examine the distinctive features of Makasae's affixation patterns and contribute to the broader field of Trans-New Guinea linguistics. Stump's *Inflectional Morphology: A Theory of Paradigm Structure* (2001) offers an innovative approach to understanding affixation in inflectional morphology. Stump focuses on paradigm-based morphology, particularly in inflectional systems where affixes modify the form of words to indicate grammatical categories like tense, number, gender, and case.

His theory introduces the concept of morphological productivity and how affixes combine systematically to create various forms within a paradigm (Nurhayati & Rahman, 2024). Stump emphasizes that affixes, particularly inflectional ones, must follow strict rules of morphological agreement within a paradigm, suggesting that word formation is not just a matter of attaching morphemes but involves structural constraints that govern how affixes are applied. This theory is crucial for understanding the dynamic nature of affixation, particularly in languages with complex inflectional systems, and it contributes significantly to our understanding of how affixes interact within a grammatical paradigm.

In *Morphology: A Handbook on Inflection and Word-Formation* (2003), Baerman provides a comprehensive overview of affixation, particularly focusing on the distinction between inflectional and derivational affixes. Baerman introduces the concept of morphological markedness, which relates to how affixes are used to express non-neutral grammatical forms. His work explores the interactions between affixation and syntactic structure, emphasizing that while derivational affixes create new lexical items (e.g., from verbs to nouns), inflectional affixes are primarily concerned with grammatical relations such as tense and agreement. One of Baerman's key insights is that affixation can be non-concatenative in some languages, where affixes do not simply attach to roots in a linear fashion but instead may involve internal modification of the root itself. Baerman's analysis has been influential in the study of both inflection and derivation, particularly in understanding the role of affixation in complex morphological systems.

Van Oostendorp's *The Phonology of the Dutch Medium Verb System* (2012) addresses the intersection of phonology and morphology, focusing on the role of affixes in word formation and how their phonological properties influence their attachment to roots. Van Oostendorp's approach emphasizes the importance of phonological conditioning in affixation, particularly how the form of affixes is influenced by the phonological properties of the root to which they are attached. His work brings attention to how affixation is not only a syntactic process but also a phonological one, where the shape of the affix can change depending on the phonological environment of the root. This perspective is particularly relevant in languages with allomorphy, where affixes exhibit different forms depending on the sounds surrounding them. Van Oostendorp's work highlights how the phonological constraints on affixation add complexity to the rules governing word formation,

offering an important consideration for understanding how affixes function across languages with diverse phonological and morphological systems.

Aronoff and Fudeman (2011) present a comprehensive exploration of morphology, with a particular focus on affixation and its role in word formation. They discuss the distinction between derivational and inflectional affixes, and how these two types of affixes contribute to the creation of new words and the grammatical modification of existing ones. Aronoff and Fudeman introduce morpheme ordering principles, which dictate the hierarchical arrangement of affixes, and emphasize how affixation can create complex morphological structures. Their work is particularly useful for understanding the fundamentals of morphological theory and provides a modern framework for understanding the role of affixation in word formation across languages.

### Research Method

The data collection process focused specifically on eliciting examples of prefixes used in Makasae. The researcher employed several techniques to gather data on how these prefixes function in word formation. Elicitation Tasks: Native speakers of Makasae were asked to produce words that involve common prefixes in the language. These tasks focused on prefixes that mark grammatical features such as tense, aspect, negation, causation, and others. The participants would also be asked to explain the meaning of the resulting word forms to gain insight into the semantic roles of each prefix. This process would help the researcher understand both the grammatical functions and the meanings carried by prefixes in Makasae.

Once the data were collected, a qualitative descriptive approach was used to analyze the prefixes in Makasae. This approach focused on identifying and categorizing the prefixes used in the language and examining how they contributed to the grammatical and syntactic structure of Makasae.

### Results and Discussion

This section explores the morphological patterns of the prefixes ‘Au’- and ‘Tuli’- in Makasae. It examines how these prefixes combine with various roots to form adjectives and verbs, respectively. The analysis highlights the role of ‘Au’- in creating descriptive adjectives and action verbs, as well as the use of ‘Tuli’- to form forceful or dynamic action verbs. The discussion will provide insights into the productivity and regularity of these prefixes in shaping the language’s grammar.

#### Analyzing the Prefix “Au”- + Verbs in Makasae Language

NU	Prefixes ‘au’+Verbs	Verbs	Meaning
1	‘au’-+tina	autina	To cook
2	‘au’-+bae	aubane	To wash
3	‘au’-+aula’a	aula’a	To go
4	‘au’-+nawa	aunawa	To eat
5	‘au’-+teri	auteri	To cut (use a sword)
6	‘au’-+lasi	aulasi	To cut (use a sword)
7	‘au’-+muni	aumuni	To kiss
8	‘au’-+bura	aubura	To sell
9	‘au’-+teu	auteu	To buy
10	‘au’-+misa	aumisa	To climb

11	‘au’-+pisaaka	aupisaaka	To tear
12	‘au’-+rei	aurei	To pull
13	‘au’-+liana	auliana	To throw a way
14	‘au’-+gehe	augehe	To drink
15	‘au’-+gini	augini	To do
16	‘au’-+wakaala	auwakaala	To throw a way
17	‘au’-+sapa	ausapa	To tie up
18	‘au’-+gasil	augasil	To tie up
19	‘au’-+nake	aunake	To take
20	‘au’-+lia	aulia	To steal
21	‘au’-+turu	auturu	To pull out
22	‘au’-+paili	aupaili	To lick
23	‘au’-+lere	aulere	To pull out
24	‘au’-+meli	aumeli	To pick up
25	‘au’-+ma;u	auma’u	To come
26	‘au’-+mosu	aumosu	To swallow
27	‘au’-+palini	aupalini	To chew
28	‘au’-+tiala’a	autia’ala	To kick
29	‘au’-+muiiri	aumuiiri	To play
30	‘au’-+sarana	ausarana	To peel
31	‘au’-+lo’e	aulo’e’	To open
32	‘au’-+saregini	ausaregini	To clean
33	‘au’-+paana	aupaana	To feed
34	‘au’-+auwaara	auwaara	To call
35	‘au’-+se’i	ause’i	To cut (use a knife)
36	‘au’-+guta	auguta	To kill
37	‘au’-+dudulu	aududulu	To push
38	‘au’-+mara	aumara	To go

The list of the prefixes ‘Au’- on the data (1-37) above combined with verb roots of the Makasae language to create new verbs, which typically transforming them into action-oriented words. These verbs are often associated with physical or dynamic actions, such as cooking, eating, buying, or cutting. The prefix ‘Au’- appears to have a regular, productive role in the language, enabling the creation of a wide range of verbs that describe various actions or events. In total, 37 instances of the ‘Au’- prefix combined with verb roots were identified in the provided data.

These verbs cover a broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from basic actions like go, eat, and buy, to more specific activities like kiss, sell, steal, and tear. The prefix ‘Au’- seems to serve as a marker that turns a wide variety of roots into action verbs, making it an essential part of the verbal morphology in Makasae. While ‘Au’- does not drastically alter the root’s inherent meaning, it marks the word as an action or process, emphasizing the dynamic nature of the root.

### Analyzing of Prefixes “Tuli”- + Verbs of Makasae Language

NU	Prefixes ‘Tuli’-+ Verbs	Verbs	Meanings
1	‘tuli’-+base	tulibase	To beat dead
2	‘tuli’-+tulidi’aala	Tulidia’ala	To kick dead
3	‘tuli’-+li’aana	Tulili’aana	To throw (something at someone or something)
4	‘tuli’-+dauunu	tulidaunu	To stab dead
5	‘tuli’-+duri	tuliduri	To shoot dead
6	‘tuli’-+dema	tulidema	To fuck dead (vw)
7	‘tuli’-+baraara	tulibaraara	To curse dead
8	‘tuli’-+basaala	tulibasaala	To slap dead

9	'tuli'+dukuu	tulidukuu	To punch dead
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The list of the prefixes 'Tuli'- on the Makasae language on (1-9) above are used to form verbs by attaching it to various root words. This combination generally creates verbs that describe forceful, physical actions or events, often involving violence or intense physical interaction. In total, there are 9 instances of the prefix 'Tuli'- used with different verb roots in the data provided. These verbs include actions like beating, kicking, stabbing, shooting, and slapping, as well as more intense expressions like cursing or the vulgar term "fuck dead." The prefix 'Tuli'- seems to add a dynamic, impactful quality to the root verbs, signaling physical action or aggression.

The morphological pattern of 'Tuli'- appears to be a productive and regular process in Makasae, allowing for the creation of verbs that describe actions requiring force or physical engagement. The prefix does not drastically change the root's meaning but instead intensifies or specifies the type of action. Overall, 'Tuli'- plays a crucial role in the language by enabling the formation of verbs that convey physical or intense actions, with 9 combinations observed in the data.

**Analysis of prefixes "Au"- +Adjectives in Makasae Language**

NU	Prefixes 'Au'+ Adjectives	Adjectives	Meanings
1	'au'+rau	aurau	fine/well
2	'au'+umu	aumu	dead
3	'au'+lapu	aulapu	live
4	'au'+asaana	auasana	long
5	'au'+digaara	audigaara	short
6	'au'+saara	ausaara	dry
7	'au'+butiiri	aubutiiri	white
8	'au'+nokorau	aunokorau	bad
9	'au'+nogo-nogo	aunogo-nogo	damn
10	'au'+bo'ooko	Bo'ooko	Rotten
11	'au'+gira-gira	augira-gira	Crazy

The list of the prefixes 'Au'- of the Makasae language on the data (1-11) above are used to form adjectives by attaching to various root words. These roots often represent qualities, conditions, or states such as life, death, size, color, or mental states. By adding 'Au'-, the roots become adjectives that describe these qualities in people, objects, or situations. The prefix 'Au'- is highly productive, meaning it can combine with many different roots to create adjectives without drastically altering the core meaning of the root. Instead, it marks the root as an adjective that indicates a particular state or condition.

In total, 10 prefixes with 'Au'- were found in the data, showing that this morphological pattern is a regular and important tool in Makasae for creating descriptive language. The 'Au'- prefix helps transform a wide range of root words into adjectives, making it an essential part of the language's structure.

**Conclusion**

This study has examined the prefixes Au- and Tuli- in Makasae, focusing on their role in the language's morphological system. The findings demonstrate that

both prefixes are highly productive, contributing significantly to word formation. The prefix Au- attaches to a variety of roots to create adjectives and verbs, expanding the range of descriptive and action-oriented terms in the language. Specifically, 38 instances of Au- were found forming verbs and 11 instances forming adjectives, highlighting its versatility.

On the other hand, Tuli- combines with verb roots to create forceful, physical, or aggressive actions, with 9 instances observed in the data. Both prefixes help shape the grammatical structure of Makasae by turning simple root words into complex terms, enriching the language's ability to describe actions, states, and qualities. This research not only advances our understanding of Makasae's morphological processes but also contributes to the documentation and preservation of this language within the Trans-New Guinea family.

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