



A Morphological Analysis of Verb Attaching Affixes In Thie Dialect of Rote Language

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p>Article history</p> <p>Received : Nov, 29th 2025</p> <p>Revised : Dec, 19th 2025</p> <p>Accepted : Dec, 25th 2025</p> <p>OPEN ACCESS</p>	<p>This research investigates the morphological process of verb-attaching affixes in the Thie dialect of the Rote language, focusing on their forms, types, and meanings. The study was conducted in Busalangga, Thie Village, Rote Ndao Regency, using a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected through elicitation techniques such as interviews, note-taking, and audio recordings with native speakers of the Thie dialect as informants. This approach was chosen to accurately describe the linguistic features of the dialect in its natural context. The findings reveal that the Thie dialect employs two major types of affixation processes: prefixation and circumfixation. The prefix {man-} functions as a derivational morpheme that forms agent nouns referring to the doer of an action, while the circumfix {man-...-k} indicates agentive nouns expressing past or completed actions. These morphological processes show the productivity and complexity of the Thie dialect, contributing to a deeper understanding of word formation in Austronesian languages and the linguistic richness of local dialects in Indonesia.</p>
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1. Introduction

Language is one of the most essential aspects of human life, serving as the primary means of communication through which people express ideas, emotions, intentions, and cultural identity. Linguists define language as a systematic set of sounds and symbols used for communication, bound by grammatical rules that enable speakers to produce meaningful utterances. Beyond its communicative function, language reflects social identity and cultural diversity. Indonesia, as an archipelagic nation, is renowned for its linguistic richness, with more than seven hundred regional languages spread across its islands. Each of these languages carries its own grammatical system, vocabulary, and structural characteristics that represent the culture of its speakers.

Among these languages is the Rote language, spoken by the people of Rote Ndao Regency in East Nusa Tenggara Province. The Rote language is part of the Austronesian language family and is divided into several dialects, including Termanu, Dengka, Lole, and Thie, among others. Each dialect has distinctive linguistic characteristics in terms of pronunciation, morphology, and syntax. However, compared to other regional languages in Indonesia, Rote particularly its Thie dialect has received very limited scholarly attention. While several studies have been conducted on Rote language as a whole, linguistic analysis focusing specifically on the Thie dialect remains scarce, especially in the field of morphology.

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the rules governing word formation. It examines how morphemes the smallest units of meaning combine to form new words or change grammatical categories. One of the most significant morphological processes is affixation, in which bound morphemes such as prefixes, suffixes, infixes, or circumfixes are attached to root words. Affixation serves both derivational and inflectional functions: derivational affixes form new lexical items or change word classes (for example, from verbs to nouns), while inflectional affixes modify grammatical categories such as tense, number, or aspect without changing word class.

In the context of Austronesian languages, affixation is one of the most productive and characteristic features. Many studies such as those by Alexiadou (2008), Noyer (1992), and Blust (2009) have demonstrated how affixation in Austronesian languages functions to express agentivity, voice, and aspectual distinctions. For instance, in Tagalog, the prefix *mag-* and infix *-um-* mark actor focus, while in Malay and Indonesian, prefixes such as *meN-* and *ber-* form verbs and indicate transitivity or reflexivity. Similarly, in regional languages of eastern Indonesia such as Bima, Tetun, and Manggarai, affixation processes play a crucial role in distinguishing verb types and grammatical relations.

Despite these extensive studies, there is still little documentation of the morphological system of the Thie dialect of the Rote language. Preliminary observations suggest that Thie, like many Austronesian varieties, exhibits a rich system of verbal affixation. However, no systematic description has yet been published regarding how verbs in Thie are modified through affixation, what types of morphemes are involved, and how these processes contribute to meaning formation. Such research is vital not only for linguistic documentation but also for understanding the broader typological patterns of Austronesian morphology.

Therefore, this study was conducted to fill that gap by providing a morphological analysis of verb-attaching affixes in the Thie dialect of Rote language. Specifically, it aims to (1) identify the forms of affixes attached to verbs in the Thie dialect, (2) classify the types of affixation processes involved, and (3) analyze the meanings and grammatical functions of each affix. By addressing these objectives, the study seeks to contribute to the description and preservation of the Thie dialect as part of Indonesia's linguistic heritage and to add to the growing body of literature on affixation within Austronesian languages.

From a theoretical perspective, the study draws upon morphological theories concerning word formation and affixation as described by Bauer (1983), Katamba (1993), and Lieber (2009), who emphasize that affixation is central to the productivity and creativity of human language. These theories provide the analytical framework for describing how affixes in Thie dialect modify the grammatical structure and semantic content of base verbs. In addition, this research follows the descriptive linguistic approach proposed by Duranti (2005), which focuses on natural language data and cultural context as essential components of linguistic analysis.

In summary, the significance of this research lies in its dual contribution: (1) descriptive, by documenting the forms and functions of affixation in an underrepresented regional dialect, and (2) theoretical, by expanding cross-linguistic understanding of morphological processes in Austronesian languages. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for future linguistic research in East Nusa Tenggara and as supporting material for efforts in language maintenance and revitalization within the Rote-speaking community.

2. Research Method

This research employed a qualitative descriptive approach because it aimed to describe linguistic phenomena as they naturally occur in the Thie dialect without numerical or statistical analysis. The qualitative descriptive method was chosen to provide a detailed explanation of the forms, types, and meanings of verb-attaching affixes in the Thie dialect of the Rote language. This approach allows the researcher to describe morphological processes based on real linguistic data collected directly from native speakers.

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in Busalangga, Thie Village, which is located in the Southwest Rote Sub-district of Rote Ndao Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province. This location was chosen because the majority of its inhabitants actively use the Thie dialect in daily communication, making it a rich

source of authentic linguistic data. The participants of this study consisted of native speakers of the Thie dialect who were selected based on their fluency, daily language use, and long-term residence in the village. A total of four informants two male and two female between the ages of 45 and 70 years were involved. They were chosen because they are respected elders in the community and are considered competent speakers who can provide accurate information about the dialect.

Data Collection Techniques

The data were collected using three main techniques: elicitation, note-taking, and audio recording.

1. Elicitation involved structured and semi-structured interviews with informants to obtain examples of verbs and their affixed forms. The researcher prepared a list of basic verbs and encouraged informants to produce sentences or explanations using those verbs.
2. Note-taking was used to record the informants' responses and contextual usage of each form, ensuring that every morphological variation was accurately captured.
3. Audio recording was employed to ensure the accuracy of pronunciation and to preserve the authenticity of the data. All recordings were transcribed into written form for further analysis.

This triangulation of techniques strengthened data reliability and validity. The researcher also conducted member checking by consulting the same informants again after transcription to confirm the accuracy of the data and interpretation.

Data Analysis Procedures

The collected data were analyzed using morphological analysis, focusing on the identification, classification, and interpretation of verb-attaching affixes. The analysis followed these steps:

1. Transcription is converting the audio-recorded data into written Thie forms using consistent orthographic conventions.
2. Identification and classification are identifying all verbs that contained affixes and classifying them according to affix type (prefix, suffix, infix, or circumfix).
3. Morphological analysis is analyzing how each affix attaches to the root verb and determining whether it performs derivational or inflectional functions.
4. Semantic interpretation is explaining the meanings derived from the affixation process, focusing on how the affix changes the meaning or grammatical category of the verb.
5. Description and presentation are presenting the results in descriptive form supported by examples and tables that illustrate the structure and meaning of the affixed verbs.

Research Instrument

The main research instrument was the researcher herself, who acted as the planner, data collector, transcriber, and analyst. Supporting instruments included a voice recorder, a notebook, and observation sheets for documenting linguistic data and contextual information.

Data Validation

To ensure the validity and reliability of the data, the study employed data triangulation, combining multiple sources and techniques (elicitation, observation, recording, and verification). In addition, expert consultation with linguists familiar with Austronesian morphology helped strengthen the accuracy of the morphological classification. In summary, this methodological framework allowed the researcher to systematically describe the verb-attaching affixes of the Thie dialect, interpret their grammatical functions, and present them in a descriptive and analytical format that aligns with qualitative linguistic research principles.

3. Research Findings and Discussion

This study identified two major types of affixation processes that attach to verbs in the Thie dialect of the Rote language: prefixation and circumfixation. Each process contributes differently to word formation and meaning, functioning primarily as derivational morphemes that change verbs into agentive nouns. The analysis is presented in two sections: (1) prefixation using the morpheme {man-}, and (2) circumfixation using {man-...-k}.

3.1 Prefixation ({man-})

The prefix {man-} is one of the most productive affixes found in the Thie dialect. It attaches to verb roots and derives agent nouns, indicating a person who performs or habitually engages in an action. Morphologically, {man-} functions as a derivational prefix, changing the grammatical category from a verb to a noun.

Table 1. Prefixation in the Thie Dialect of Rote Language

No	Root Verb	Prefixed Form	Meaning (English)
1	Mai	Man-mai	Newcomer
2	Nane	Man-nane	Swimmer
3	Hika	Man-hika	Laugher
4	Le’a	Man-le’a	Puller
5	Kiki	Man-kiki	Biter

The examples below illustrate the use of the prefix {man-} in sentences from native speaker data:

1. *Inak na ndia man-mai.* → “That woman is a newcomer.”
2. *Touk na ndia man-nane.* → “That man is a swimmer.”
3. *Hatahori na ndia man-hika.* → “That person is a laugher.”

4. *Au ndia man-kiki o liman.* → “I am the one who bites your hand.”
5. *Kakanak na ndia man-le’a au ba’du.* → “That child is the one who pulls my shirt.”

These examples show that the prefix {man-} consistently derives agent nouns from verbs. The base verbs (*mai*, *nane*, *hika*, *le’a*, *kiki*) indicate actions, while the derived forms (*man-mai*, *man-nane*, etc.) refer to the actor or agent performing those actions. Functionally, {man-} serves a derivational purpose, altering the lexical category and introducing a semantic role of agency.

Semantically, the prefix also encodes habitual or general agency describing someone who habitually performs the action. This aligns with derivational affixation found in other Austronesian languages such as Tagalog (*mang-*) and Indonesian (*peN-*), which also form agentive nouns. Thus, {man-} in Thie dialect can be viewed as part of a wider Austronesian pattern of agentive prefixation.

3.2 Circumfixation ({man-...-k})

In addition to prefixation, the study found that the Thie dialect employs a circumfix {man-...-k} that surrounds the root verb. This circumfix also produces agent nouns but with an additional aspectual meaning it often implies a completed or past action performed by the agent.

Table 2. Circumfixation in the Thie Dialect of Rote Language

NNo	Root Verb	Circumfixed Form	Meaning (English)
1	Ha’i	Man-ha’i-k	The one who took
2	Nasu	Man-nasu-k	The one who cooked
3	Kali	Man-kali-k	The one who dug
4	Sasa	Man-sasa-k	The one who swept
5	Paru	Man-paru-k	The one who grated

The following examples demonstrate the circumfix in use:

1. *Hatori na ndia man-nasu-k utak.* → “That person is the one who cooked the vegetables.”
2. *Touk na ndia man-ha’i-k no.* → “That man is the one who took the coconut.”
3. *Inak na ndia man-sasa-k au uman.* → “That woman is the one who swept my house.”
4. *Hatori na ndia man-kali-k dae.* → “That person is the one who dug the ground.”
5. *Touk na ndia man-paru-k fiti.* → “That man is the one who grated the coconut.”

The circumfix {man-...-k} differs from the prefix {man-} not only morphologically but also semantically. While both derive agent nouns, {man-...-k} indicates that the action is completed or refers to a specific past event, functioning as both a derivational and aspectual morpheme. It highlights the perfective aspect, linking the morphological process to temporal reference in discourse.

From a grammatical standpoint, {man-...-k} can be interpreted as a fusion of derivational and inflectional functions—it derives an agent noun (derivational) while simultaneously encoding tense/aspect (inflectional). This feature makes the Thie dialect's morphology distinctive within the Rote language family.

3.3 Comparative and Functional Analysis

The findings indicate that both prefixation and circumfixation in Thie dialect perform agentive derivation, yet they differ in aspectual nuance and pragmatic function. The prefix {man-} typically marks habitual or general agentivity, while the circumfix {man-...-k} specifies completed or past actions. This dual morphological system parallels patterns found in other Austronesian languages where prefixes indicate ongoing or habitual actions and circumfixes denote perfective or resultative meanings. Such patterns support the hypothesis that Thie retains conservative Austronesian features, reflecting both innovation and inheritance within its morphological system. Furthermore, the productivity of {man-} and {man-...-k} demonstrates the Thie dialect's ability to expand its lexicon through systematic affixation. The affixes not only form new lexical items but also express grammatical relationships and temporal distinctions, contributing to the dialect's expressive depth.

The analysis concludes that the Thie dialect exhibits two dominant verb-affixation processes prefixation and circumfixation that are primarily derivational in nature. These affixes enrich the language's morphology by allowing verbs to be converted into agentive nouns with nuanced temporal meanings. The prefix {man-} functions as a general agentive marker, while the circumfix {man-...-k} functions as a past or perfective agentive marker. Both reveal how morphology in Thie dialect serves not only lexical but also grammatical and aspectual functions, aligning with broader Austronesian morphological principles.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal two major morphological processes in the Thie dialect of the Rote language: prefixation and circumfixation. These processes are realized through the prefix {man-} and the circumfix {man-...-k}, both of which attach to verb roots to derive

agentive nominal forms. This morphological phenomenon demonstrates how the Thie dialect systematically employs affixation not only to derive new lexical categories but also to encode temporal and semantic nuances that reflect its linguistic identity.

In the Thie dialect, the prefix {man-} serves a derivational function by turning verb bases into agent nouns that relate to the individual carrying out an action. For example, man-mai, which means "newcomer," comes from mai, which means "to come," and man-nane, which means "swimmer," comes from nane, which means "to swim." This affixation pattern is consistent with the idea of derivational morphemes put forth by Tyler (1989) and Bickel (2007), who claim that derivational morphology modifies grammatical categories and meanings to produce new words.

Additionally, the circumfix {man-...-k} can be added to verbs to create agent nouns, but it only refers to past activities. For instance, nasu, which means "to cook," is the root of man-nasu-k, which means "the one who cooked." The addition of {-k} at the end of the circumfix indicates a morphological encoding of temporal meaning, a trait that is infrequently recorded in Indonesian local languages, even though nouns normally do not communicate tense. This result builds on Alexiadou's (2008) contention that affixation can influence a language's minor aspectual or temporal nuances in addition to lexical derivation.

The results of this study are in contrast to Ghising's (2009) examination of verbal affixation in Tamang, which found more than eighteen different kinds of affixes utilized for causal and aspectual marking. Because its affixes encode both agentivity and temporal dimensions, the Thie dialect compensates for its simpler morphological system with superior semantic precision. This suggests that although both Tamang and Thie are typologically rich in affixes, Thie's functional distribution of affixes is more closely associated with social and narrative contexts, especially when it comes to distinguishing the agent and the temporal frame of an event

4. Conclusion

This study analyzed the morphological process of verb-attaching affixes in the Thie dialect of the Rote language, focusing on the forms, types, and meanings of the affixes. The findings revealed two primary affixation processes used in the dialect: prefixation and circumfixation. Both processes serve a derivational function, forming new lexical items specifically agent nouns from verbal roots. The prefix {man-} is the most productive affix and is used to derive general agentive nouns that describe a person who habitually performs

an action. In contrast, the circumfix {man-...-k} forms agentive nouns that refer to completed or past actions, adding a temporal or aspectual dimension to the word.

The analysis demonstrates that affixation in the Thie dialect not only contributes to word formation but also encodes grammatical and semantic information, reflecting the dialect's morphological richness and linguistic creativity. The distinction between the functions of prefixation and circumfixation highlights the language's ability to express both agentivity and aspect through morphological means. Furthermore, the existence of these affixes aligns the Thie dialect with broader Austronesian morphological patterns, particularly in how derivational morphemes are used to indicate voice, agency, and aspectual meaning.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce morphological principles proposed by linguists such as Bauer (1983) and Katamba (1993), who note that derivational affixes are essential for the productivity of a language. In the case of the Thie dialect, the derivational morphemes {man-} and {man-...-k} illustrate how local languages employ affixation to expand their lexicon and encode nuanced meanings.

In conclusion, this study contributes both descriptively and theoretically to the field of morphology and language documentation. Descriptively, it provides one of the few systematic analyses of affixation in the Thie dialect. Theoretically, it enhances our understanding of Austronesian word formation and the interaction between derivation and aspect. Future research is recommended to explore other morphological processes in the Thie dialect such as suffixation, reduplication, and compounding and to conduct comparative analyses with other Rote dialects. Such studies would further support the preservation and revitalization of this unique linguistic heritage within the broader context of Indonesian linguistic diversity.

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