

## Research on Affixes in the Indonesian Language

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### Abstract

This article delves into the study of affixes in the Indonesian language. It explores the critical role that affixes play in word formation from a linguistic perspective. By categorizing and summarizing various types of affix usage in Indonesian, such as prefixes, infixes, and suffixes, it aims to provide a deeper understanding of linguistics and foster further research in language. The article highlights the distinctive features of two classic Indonesian affixes, “me-” and “-nya,” shedding light on their diverse grammatical functions and their significance in both linguistic analysis and cross-cultural communication. Besides, this article primarily analyzes the importance of affixes in word formation from a linguistic perspective. It categorizes and summarizes different types of affix usages in Indonesian and extracts the essence for a deeper understanding of linguistics and further language research.

**Key words:** Indonesian language; Affixes, Prefixes, Suffixes me; Suffixes-nya

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## 1. LEXICAL SYSTEM AND MORPHEMES

### 1.1 Lexical System

The lexical system, a linguistic term established in 2011, is used to define the interconnected vocabulary units

that make up the overall lexicon. The lexical system comprises three different levels of units: morphemes, words, and fixed phrases. The relationship between them is as follows: morphemes are the smallest lexical units, words consist of several morphemes, and fixed phrases are composed of several words.

### 1.2 Morphemes

Morphemes are the smallest phoneme-meaning units in language and are the fundamental units of language. They are indivisible. For example, in Chinese, the word “兄弟” (brothers) is not a morpheme because it is not the smallest phoneme-meaning unit; it can be divided into two smaller meaningful units, “兄” (elder brother) and “弟” (younger brother). Similarly, words like “事故” (accident), “工业” (industry), “看见” (to see), “部分” (part), “命令” (command), “赠送” (to give as a gift), etc., are composed of two morphemes. Morphemes in Chinese are typically equivalent to individual characters, but not always, for example, “玻璃” (glass), “蜘蛛” (spider), “秋千” (swing), “窈窕” (slim and graceful), “沙发” (sofa), “吉它” (guitar) consist of two characters but represent a single morpheme. Morphemes primarily serve the purpose of word formation and constitute the building blocks of words, which is why they are also referred to as “morphemes.”

## 2. ROOT AND AFFIXES

Morphemes can be classified into two categories based on their specific roles within words: roots and affixes. In a complete word, the root is its core component, while affixes are used to indicate additional meanings or modify grammatical features. In other words, a word can exist without affixes, but it cannot exist without a root.

A root is the most fundamental part of a word and represents its basic meaning. Affixes, on the other hand, cannot stand alone and must attach to roots to function. Affixes have the ability to form new words when

combined with various roots, making them essential in extending meanings or changing the status of words.

### 3. AFFIXES IN INDONESIAN

#### 3.1 Introduction

From a historical perspective, Indonesian belongs to the Austronesian language family and, typologically, it is an isolating language. Its linguistic structure, whether in phonetics, vocabulary, or grammar, has distinct characteristics that set it apart from other languages.

#### 3.2 Classification of Affixes

According to linguistic methods, affixes can be classified using two approaches: function-based classification and position-based classification.

Function-based classification, as mentioned earlier, categorizes affixes based on their unique roles in supplementing root word meanings or changing their status. Affixes can be divided into two categories based on this approach: derivational and inflectional affixes. Derivational affixes add semantic value to words, attaching to root words to create new words. They do not carry standalone lexical meanings but can indicate additional meanings, effectively serving to derive new words. For example, in English, the suffix “-er” in “teacher” and “worker.” Inflectional affixes, on the other hand, add grammatical meanings, attaching to roots or stems created by the combination of roots and derivational affixes, to create different forms of words, such as the past participle “-ed” and the present participle “-ing” in English words.

Position-based classification focuses on where affixes appear in relation to the root word, dividing them into prefixes, infixes, and suffixes.

Prefixes are affixes that appear before the root word, also known as premodifiers or word heads. Examples include the “老” in Chinese words like “老大” (eldest) and “老二” (second), the “re-” and “dis-” in English, and “per-” and “ber-” in Indonesian.

Infixes are inserted within the root word. They are prevalent in the Austronesian and South Asian language families. In Indonesian, there are at least five types of infixes: “-el-”, “-em-”, “-er-”, “-ah-”, and “-in-”. For example, “gembung” (swollen) becomes “gelembung” (bubble), “cerlang” (shining) becomes “cemerlang” (brilliant), and “gigi” (teeth) becomes “gerigi” (serrated object).

Suffixes appear after the root word. Examples include the “者” in Chinese words like “学者” (scholar) and “作者” (author), and the “儿” in “花儿” (flower) and “鸟儿” (bird).

#### 3.3 Affixes in Indonesian

Indonesian has five types of derivational affixes: prefixes,

infixes, suffixes, circumfixes, and combinatorial affixes. Additionally, there are multiple prefixes.

Prefixes (prefiks) are affixes added to the front of a root word to create new words. For example, “me-” in “merokok” (to smoke).

Infixes (infiks) are affixes inserted within the root word to create new words. For example, “-em-” in “jemari” (fingers and toes). Indonesian has infixes like “-el-”, “-er-”, “-em-”, and others. When attached to the root word, they “interpolate” within the root, splitting it. For example, the adjective root “gegar” (turbulent) with the infix “-el-” becomes “gelegar” (rumbling).

Suffixes (sufiks) are affixes added to the end of the root word to create new words. For example, “-an” in “makanan” (food).

Circumfixes (konfiks) are composed of two parts that enclose the root word, creating new words. Examples include “ke-an” and “pe-an.” They are attached to the root like a pair of brackets, with one part at the beginning and the other at the end.

Combinatorial affixes (gabungan imbuhan) involve using two or more of the following: prefixes, infixes, and suffixes to modify the root word. Typically, these affixes are combined in pairs.

Given the wide variety of affix types in Indonesian, this article focuses on two of the most classic affixes in Indonesian, “me-” and “-nya”:

In Indonesian, the most classic prefix is the “me-” form of verbs. Most Indonesian verbs, apart from root verbs, are continuous verbs formed by adding affixes to the root. In “me-” verbs, the nasal prefix “me-” induces phonetic changes between the prefix and the root, leading to specific variations. The variations are as follows:

When the first phoneme of the root is m, n, ng, ny, y, w, l, or r, adding “me-” does not cause phonetic changes. For example, “mulai” becomes “memulai,” “nilai” becomes “memilai,” and “lihat” becomes “melihat.”

If the first phoneme of the root is b, f, or v, it becomes “mem-.” For example, “baca” becomes “membaca,” “beli” becomes “membeli,” and “veto” becomes “memveto.”

If the first phoneme of the root is p, adding “me-” changes it to m. For example, “pinjam” becomes “meminjam,” “pimpin” becomes “memimpin,” and “pukul” becomes “memukul.”

If the first phoneme of the root is t, adding “me-” changes it to n. For example, “tolong” becomes “menolong,” “tajam” becomes “menajam,” and “tetap” becomes “menetap.”

If the first phoneme of the root is s, adding “me-” changes it to ny. For example, “sewa” becomes “menyewa,” and “satu” becomes “menyatu.”

If the first phoneme of the root is d, c, j, or sy, adding “me-” changes it to “men-.” For example, “dekat” becomes “mendekat,” “cuci” becomes “mencuci,” and “cari” becomes “mencari.”

If the first phoneme of the root is k, adding “me” changes it to ng. For example, “kurus” becomes “mengurus,” “kurang” becomes “mengurang,” and “kenal” becomes “menkenal.”

If the first phoneme of the root is g, h, kh, a, e, o, i, or u, adding “me-” changes it to “meng-.” For example, “ambil” becomes “mengambil,” “isi” becomes “mengisi,” and “uji” becomes “menguji.”

For monosyllabic words with the first phoneme as a consonant, an extra vowel sound, “e,” is typically added before “meng-.” For example, “tik” becomes “mengetik,” “cat” becomes “mengecat,” and “bom” becomes “mengebom.”

Moreover, the combination of “me-” with different parts of speech has various grammatical meanings. “Me-” + a noun can indicate “using, making, tending toward, resembling,” etc. “Me-” + an adjective can indicate “tending toward” or transform an adjective into a verb, typically functioning as an intransitive verb. In general, “me-kan” verbs in Indonesian are mostly transitive verbs. “Me-” + numerals is a special usage, usually only used with “satu” (one) and “dua” (two).

On the other hand, the most classic suffix in Indonesian is the “-nya” form. It serves several grammatical functions:

A. “-nya” as an object indicates “he (she, it)” or “they.”

(a) “-nya” as a direct object in transitive verbs. For example:

“Situasi ekonomi keluarga kita tidak mengizinkannya.” - “The economic situation of our family does not allow it (him/her) to continue studying.”

“Akhirnya pacar Ma Li meninggalkannya.” - “In the end, Ma Li’s boyfriend left her.”

“Li Li mengantarkannya ke rumah sakit.” - “Li Li took her to the hospital.”

(b) “-nya” as an object of a preposition. For example:

“Baju yang baru ini dibeli untuknya.” - “This new dress was bought for her.”

“Sampaikanlah salamku kepadanya!” - “Please convey my regards to him/her!”

“Baginya itu tidak menjadi soal.” - “For him/her, it’s not a problem.”

B. “-nya” functions as a possessive pronoun, representing “his (her, its)” or “their.”

(a) As an adjective in typical sentence patterns. For example:

“Orang itu pamannya.” - “That person is his uncle.”

“Kami sama-sama muridnya.” - “We are all his students.”

“Dengan gembira kedua anak perempuan itu pulang membawa beliannya.” - “Happily, the two girls went home carrying their purchases.”

(b) In specific sentence patterns, it functions as a possessive pronoun, referring to the subject of the entire sentence. For example:

“Mentimun itu manis rasanya.” - “Those cucumbers taste sweet.”

“Semangka itu murah harganya.” - “That watermelon is cheap.”

“Ruang kelas kami besar jendelanya.” - “Our classroom has large windows.”

In these patterns, the “-nya” that serves as an adjective is associated with the previously mentioned person or object in the context, such as in the third example, where “-nya” refers to “kedua anak perempuan itu” (the two girls).

C. “-nya” functions as an agent, indicating “he (she, it)” or “they.”

(a) “-nya” acts as an agent in passive sentences. For example:

“Li Li disuruhnya membeli buah-buahan.” - “He told Li Li to buy fruits.”

“Dibelinya bayam seikat dan bawang bombai setengah kilogram.” - “He bought a bundle of spinach and half a kilogram of onions.”

“Dicucunya baju yang sudah kotor itu.” - “He washed the dirty clothes.”

“Buku itu sudah dibacanya.” - “He has already read that book.”

“Dibukanya pintu kantor, dihidupkannya lampu.” - “He opened the office door and turned on the lights.”

(b) In passive sentences, “-nya” is immediately followed by “oleh” and functions both as the agent and the object of the preposition. For example:

“Buku itu sudah dibaca olehnya.” - “That book has already been read by him/her.”

“Dikatakan olehnya bahwa ia akan pergi ke Shanghai bulan depan.” - “He/she said that they would go to Shanghai next month.”

“Diceritakan olehnya pengalaman masa kecilnya.” - “He/she narrated his/her childhood experiences.”

D. “-nya” is used for emphasis, adding a strong tone. “-nya” can be added to adjectives functioning as adverbs, emphasizing the characteristics represented by the adjective. For example:

“Li Li tertawa dengan gembiranya.” - “Li Li laughed happily.”

“Mereka antri dengan tertibnya.” - “They queued up in an orderly manner.”

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, studying the affixes in Indonesian not only enriches the field of linguistics by providing material for the study of affixation, but it also holds practical significance for deepening the understanding of Indonesian and improving translation quality between Indonesian and other languages, including Chinese. Additionally, comparative research between Indonesian and Chinese affixation can contribute to cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two countries.

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