The Role of Particles in Command, Question, and Emphasis in Makasae

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Abstract: This study explores the syntactic and pragmatic roles of particles in the Makasae language, focusing on sentence-final particles such as "di," "ara," "gau," "apa," and "tai." Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and elicitation tasks with native speakers. The data analysis utilized descriptive, pragmatic, and comparative methods to examine how these particles contribute to sentence meaning, particularly in terms of commanding, questioning, emphasizing, and negating actions. The findings reveal that "ara" marks imperative mood, while "di" adds emphasis or negates actions. Particles "apa" and "tai" are used to form yes/no questions, with "apa" typically indicating general questions and "tai" used to inquire about specific actions. Additionally, "gau" helps specify the object of the action in both commands and questions. The combination of "di" and "ara" intensifies the imperative, adding force to commands. These particles play a critical role in structuring communication, allowing speakers to convey nuanced meanings in various contexts.This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the functional versatility of particles in Makasae, offering valuable insights into their syntactic and pragmatic use. It also sets the stage for further research on the linguistic structures of Timor-Leste's indigenous languages.
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Introduction

Makasae language is spoken primarily in the eastern part of Timor-Leste, an island nation in Southeast Asia. It is one of the indigenous languages of the country, primarily used by the Makasae people, and is spoken by approximately 80,000 people (Ethnologue, 2021). The language is mainly used in the eastern regions, especially in the districts of Baucau, Lospalos and Viqueque. Makasae belongs to the Trans-New Guinea language family and shares many linguistic features with other languages in the region.

Makasae language has particles such as **"apa"**, "gau","di", "ara", and "tai" are used to indicate specific grammatical functions, including questioning, emphasis, and command. "Apa" is commonly used to form questions, while "gau" can signal emphasis or clarify the subject. The particle "di" in Makasae is multifunctional: it can mark relationships, and it is also used in forming questions or issuing commands. These particles highlight the importance of such units in shaping meaning and structure, as they play crucial roles in conveying grammatical nuances within the language. As Comrie (1989) notes that particles are essential in many languages, facilitating communication by structuring meaning in ways that depend on context, particularly in marking mood and syntactical relationships. Similarly, Duranti (1997) emphasizes the role of particles in signaling various pragmatic functions, such as emphasis, negation, command and questions, which are vital for communication.

Review Related Literature

Particles are small, uninflected words or morphemes that play a crucial role in sentence structure by marking grammatical features. They do not change form to convey meaning like nouns, verbs, or adjectives but instead function to indicate aspects such as tense, aspect, mood, or case. In many languages, particles are essential for establishing grammatical relationships and organizing sentence structure. For example, in English, particles like "not" (negation) or "only" (focus) influence the meaning of a sentence, while in languages like Japanese, particles such as "は" (wa, topic marker) and "が" (ga, subject marker) clarify the grammatical roles of words in the sentence (Carnie, 2013).

Particles have diverse functions across languages. In some languages, they mark subordination (e.g., "if," "because" in English) or introduce clauses, while in others, they indicate specific grammatical aspects such as aspect markers (e.g., Mandarin's "了" for completed actions) or question markers (e.g., "吗" in Chinese). Particles can also express modality, such as necessity or possibility, and help determine the focus or emphasis in a sentence. In cases where word order is flexible, particles ensure clarity by organizing the syntactic structure, providing a framework that dictates how the words relate to each other (Cheng & Sybesma, 1999).

Theoretical approaches to grammar, such as generative grammar and minimalist theory, highlight the significance of particles in constructing meaning. Particles are often seen as functional categories that bridge syntax and semantics, marking relationships between elements in a sentence. While they may not carry lexical content, they are essential for forming coherent, well-structured sentences. In minimalist terms, particles are considered functional morphemes, contributing to the deep structure of a sentence by providing critical syntactic and semantic information, thus facilitating efficient and flexible communication (Haegeman, 2012).

Method

This study applied a qualitative descriptive approach, ideal for exploring linguistic phenomena in-depth. The focus is on understanding the use of sentence-final particles, "apa", "gau","di", "ara" and "tai" in Makasae in various sentence types and how their placement impacts meaning. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative methods allow for a rich, detailed exploration of complex linguistic features. This approach will capture both syntactic and pragmatic roles of the particles based on data from interviews and elicitation tasks, providing insights into their use in everyday and formal communication.

The data were collected using interview and elicitation techniques. Semi-structured interviews with the native speakers of Makasae language would gather contextual examples of , "apa", "gau","di", "ara" and "tai" in different sentence constructions, allowing participants to share their intuitions. In addition, elicitation tasks would prompt participants to fill in incomplete sentences with the appropriate particles, clarifying their usage. As McDonough and McDonough (1997) note, elicitation is a useful method for drawing out specific language examples in context.

The collected data would be analyzed using descriptive analysis which categorized the syntactic and morphological roles of the particles. Once the data were collected, they would be analyzed through transcription and translation whenever needed to create a clear record of the examples provided by the informants. The primary focus would be on identifying where the particles appear. The analysis would also involve comparing the data across speakers to identify common patterns and any regional or dialectal variations in particles usage.

Results and Discussion

The Makasae language employs various particles to modify sentence meaning, particularly in marking mood and emphasis. The particle "ara" is used in commands, while "di" adds emphasis or intensity to these commands. "Apa" turns statements into yes/no questions, and "gau" and "tai" are used in interrogative sentences, with "gau" often focusing on the object of the action. These particles can also combine to alter the tone or force of a sentence. For a deeper analysis of their functions, see the data below.

4.1 The Particle 'di' in Command Sentences
1. Ai   la'a ara!

   You   go   command

   "You go "

"Ai la'a ara " on the data (1) is a simple command where the subject "Ai" (meaning "You") is instructed to perform the verb "la'a" (meaning "go"). The particle "ara" marks the imperative mood, signaling that the sentence is a command. The structure follows the typical order of Subject-Verb-Particle, which is common in imperative sentences. The sentence can be interpreted as an instruction for someone to go, without additional emphasis or elaboration, hence making it a straightforward directive: "You go!"

2. Era   nawa ara!

   They   eat   command

   "they eat"

   Era nawa ara! Similarly, this sentence uses the subject "Era" (meaning "They") and the verb "nawa" (meaning "eat"), followed by the particle "ara," which, as before, marks the sentence as a command. The structure remains consistent: Subject-Verb-Particle. The phrase suggests that the speaker is commanding a group (or individuals) to eat. The sentence is simple and direct, following the same syntactic pattern as the previous example: "They eat!"

3. Gi ma'u ara!

   S/he come command

   "S/he comes"

   Gi ma'u ara! Here, the subject is "Gi" (meaning "S/he"), and the verb "ma'u" (meaning "come") follows, again with the particle "ara" at the end to indicate the command mood. This command could be understood as instructing someone (singular) to come. The sentence structure remains consistent with the Subject-Verb-Particle format, with "ara" signaling that it is an imperative command: "S/he comes!"

4. Pi   ta'e ara!

   "We sleep command"

   Pi ta'e ara! In this sentence, the subject "Pi" (meaning "We") is paired with the verb "ta'e" (meaning "sleep"), followed by the particle "ara," which, as in previous examples, marks the sentence as a command. The structure is again Subject-Verb-Particle, with the sentence functioning as a directive to the speaker and others to sleep. The interpretation of the command is simple: "We sleep!"

4.2 The Particles 'ara' and 'di' in Command Sentences"
1. Ai   la'a ara di!

   You   go   command

   "you go"

   Ai la'a ara di! In this sentence, the structure mirrors the previous one, with the subject "Ai" (meaning "You") and the verb "la'a" (meaning "go"). However, this sentence introduces the particle "di" in addition to "ara." While "ara" still marks the command mood, "di" likely serves an additional grammatical function, possibly adding emphasis or intensity to the command. The exact role of "di" is unclear without more context, but it seems to underscore

the imperative nature of the command. The sentence structure becomes Subject-Verb-Particle-Particle, with both particles contributing to the force of the command: "You go!"

2. Gi ma'u ara di!

        S/he comes command

        " s/he comes"

Gi ma'u ara di! Here, the subject "Gi" (meaning "S/he") is paired with the verb "ma'u" (meaning "come"), followed by both "ara" (marking the command) and "di," which again likely adds emphasis or modifies the command in some way. The sentence follows the same structure of Subject-Verb-Particle-Particle, where the dual particles seem to work together to convey a stronger or more urgent directive: "S/he comes!"

3. Maria tina ara di.

        PN   cook   command

        "Maria cooks"

Maria tina ara di. In this example, the proper noun "Maria" (a name) serves as the subject, with the verb "tina" (meaning "cook") following. The sentence includes both the "ara" particle, indicating the command mood, and "di," which adds a layer of meaning. Given that the sentence uses a proper noun, it might be a direct command to someone named Maria or to a group. The exact function of "di" is still unclear, but it might indicate an action that is not just a simple command, possibly marking a habitual or expected action in a particular context. The structure is Subject-Verb-Particle-Particle: "Maria cooks!"

4. Ani mara ara di

        I   go   command

        " I go"

Ani mara ara di. In this sentence, the subject "Ani" (meaning "I") is followed by the verb "mara" (meaning "go"). The particle "ara" marks the imperative mood, and "di" is again included, likely serving to add emphasis or intensity to the command. The sentence can be interpreted as a command to the speaker themselves or others (perhaps with a subtle difference in tone or urgency due to the presence of "di"). Like the other sentences in this section, the structure is Subject-Verb-Particle-Particle: "I go!"

4.3 The Particle 'di' in Prohibition Sentences

1. Ai   wereu   ta'e   di!

        You   neg/do not sleep command

This sentence contains the prohibitive particle "di" which, in conjunction with "wereu" (meaning "do not"), creates a command that prohibits the action of the verb "ta'e" (sleep). The phrase "Ai wereu ta'e di" translates to "You do not sleep!" where "di" emphasizes the negation, making it clear that the speaker is instructing the listener to avoid the action. The syntactic structure places the negation at the beginning of the verb phrase, followed by the action verb, and then the prohibition marker "di", which strongly negates the intended action.

2. David werau   ria di!

        PN   neg/ do not run command

In this sentence, "werau" (a negation marker) is used in combination with "di" to prohibit the action of "ria" (run). The phrase "David werau ria di!" translates to "David, do not run!" where "werau" serves as the negation, and "di" functions to emphasize the prohibition. This construction highlights a direct command aimed at David, instructing him to avoid the action of running. The syntax places the negation before the verb, followed by the prohibition particle "di", marking the strong imperative form of the sentence.

3. Gi   werau   tuku   di!

        S/he neg/ does not punch command

In this sentence, the structure is similar to the previous examples, where "werau" negates the action of the verb "tuku" (punch). The phrase "Gi werau tuku di!" translates to "S/he does not punch!" Here, the "werau" marker negates the action, and "di" reinforces the prohibition of the action. The syntactic order emphasizes the negation of the verb first, followed by the prohibition marker, making it clear that the speaker is forbidding the action of punching.

4. Ani werau   base di!

      I   neg/ do not beat command

In this sentence, "werau" is used to negate the action of "base" (beat). The sentence "Ani werau base di!" translates to "I do not beat!" where "werau" negates the action, and "di" adds emphasis to the prohibition. The structure of this sentence is similar to the others, where negation precedes the verb and the prohibition marker "di" follows the action verb to emphasize that the action of beating is not to be carried out.

4.4   The Particle 'apa' in Interrogative Sentences"

1. Ai   to'i   apa?

      "You dig command"

In this sentence, "apa" is used as the particle that transforms the verb phrase "to'i" (dig) into an interrogative form. The sentence "Ai to'i apa?" translates to "You dig?" The particle "apa" marks the entire sentence as a question, asking whether the subject (you) will perform the action of digging. The structure places "apa" at the end of the sentence, signaling that it is a yes/no question.

2. Pi   ate   lasi apa?

      We wood cut command

      In this sentence, "apa" is once again used to turn the statement "Pi ate lasi" (We cut wood) into an interrogative question. The sentence "Pi ate lasi apa?" translates to "We cut wood?" The "apa" at the end of the verb phrase signals to the listener that the speaker is asking whether the action of cutting wood will occur. The structure follows the pattern of subject-verb-object with the "apa" particle at the end, turning the statement into a yes/no question.

3. Era   umuu apa?

      They die   command

      " They die"

Here, the subject "Era" (They) is followed by the verb "umuu" (die), and "apa" turns this phrase into a question. The sentence "Era umuu apa?" translates to "They die?" The particle "apa" marks the sentence as an inquiry, asking whether the subject will die. The syntactic structure places the verb before the "apa" particle, which signals that this is a yes/no question.

4. Maria tina   apa?

      PN   cook command

      " Maria cooks"

In this sentence, "tina" (cook) is the main verb, and "apa" transforms it into a question. The sentence "Maria tina apa?" translates to "Maria cooks?" Here, "apa" indicates that the speaker is asking for confirmation or clarification about whether Maria performs the action of cooking. The particle "apa" at the end of the sentence marks the question, making it a yes/no inquiry.

4.5   The Particles 'apa' and 'di' in Command Sentences"

1. Ai   nawa apa di!

      You eat   command

      "we eat"

This sentence uses both "apa" and "di" in a command structure. The verb "nawa" (eat) is followed by "apa", indicating an imperative command. The particle "di" adds emphasis to the command, making it more forceful. The sentence "Ai nawa apa di!" translates to "You eat!" The structure combines both particles to reinforce the command, with "di" intensifying the directive action.

2. Pi   serviso apa di!

        "We work"

In this sentence, "serviso" (work) is the verb, and both "apa" and "di" are used to mark the command. The sentence "Pi serviso apa di!" translates to "We work!" The "apa" particle marks the imperative, while "di" adds strength or emphasis to the command. The syntactic structure is similar to the first example, with both particles working together to create a strong command for the subject to carry out the action of working.

3. Era gini apa di!

    They make   command

    "They make"

Here, "gini" (make) is the verb, and "apa" and "di" are used together to form an imperative sentence. The phrase "Era gini apa di!" translates to "They make!" The use of both particles makes the command clear and forceful. The syntactic order follows the typical command structure, with "apa" marking the action as an imperative and "di" reinforcing it.

4.6   The Particle 'tai' in Interrogative Sentences

1. Ai ma'u   tai?

    You come command

    " You come"

In this sentence, the particle "tai" is used to form a question. The verb "ma'u" (come) is followed by "tai", turning the phrase into a question. The sentence "Ai ma'u tai?" translates to "You come?" The "tai" particle marks the sentence as an inquiry about whether the subject will come, and the structure is clear, with "tai" placed at the end of the sentence to signal the interrogative nature.

2. Pi nawa tai?

    We eat command

    " We eat"

Similarly, "tai" is used in "Pi nawa tai?" ("We eat?") to mark the sentence as an interrogative. The verb "nawa" (eat) is followed by "tai", indicating a yes/no question. The particle "tai" turns the statement into a question, prompting the listener to affirm or deny the action.

3. Era ria   tai?

    They run command

    "they run"

In this sentence, "ria" (run) is the verb, and "tai" marks it as an interrogative. The sentence "Era ria tai?" translates to "They run?" The "tai" particle turns the statement into a question, asking whether the subject (they) will run.

4. Gi   rau tai?

    S/he ine command

"S/he is fine"

In this case, "rau" (fine) is used to describe the subject's condition, and "tai" turns the sentence into a question. The sentence "Gi rau tai?" translates to "S/he is fine?" The "tai" particle signals that the speaker is inquiring about the subject's state or condition, asking for confirmation.

4.7 The Particle 'di' in 'Yes or No' Questions"

1. Ai la'a di to   la'a?

    You go or neg/not go

    " You go or not"

In this sentence, "di" is used to negate the verb "la'a" (go), and "to" introduces the alternative option (not going). The sentence "Ai la'a di to la'a?" translates to "You go or not?" The "di" negates the action, while "to" offers a choice, making the sentence a yes/no question where the speaker asks whether the subject will go or not.

  2. Pi nawa di to nawa?

    We eat or neg eat

    " We eat or not"

Similarly, "di" negates the verb "nawa" (eat), and "to" offers the alternative. The sentence "Pi nawa di to nawa?" translates to "We eat or not?" The use of "di" and "to" together forms a yes/no question, asking whether the subject (we) will eat or not.

3. Era to'i   di to   to'i?

    They dig or neg/not dig

    "they did or not"

In this sentence, "to'i" (dig) is the verb, and "di" negates the action, while "to" presents the alternative. The sentence "Era to'i di to to'i?" translates to "They dig or not?" The "di" negates the action, and "to" asks for a choice, making this a yes/no question about whether the subject (they) will dig or not.

4. Gi base di   to   base?

    S/he hit or neg/not hit

    "she hits or not"

In this case, "base" (hit) is the verb, and "di" negates the action, while "to" offers the alternative option. The sentence "Gi base di to base?" translates to "S/he hits or not?" The structure of this sentence is similar to the others, where "di" negates the action, and "to" introduces the alternative.

4.8 The Particle 'gau' in Interrogative Sentences"

1.   Ai   gi   muni gau?
    You him/her/OBJ kiss   command
    "Do you kiss her/him"

In this sentence, "gau" is used to mark the question, turning "gi muni" (you kiss) into an inquiry. The sentence "Ai gi muni gau?" translates to "Do you kiss him/her?" Here, "gau" indicates the interrogative nature of the sentence, asking whether the action of kissing is performed.

2.   Era   ai sauunu   gau?
          They you/OBJ stab   command
          " Do they stab you?"
     Similarly, in "Era ai sauunu gau?" ("Do they stab you?"), "gau" marks the sentence as a question about whether the action of stabbing will occur. The use of "gau" makes the sentence inquire specifically about the action directed at the object ("you").

3.   Gi tinani tina   gau?
          s/he rice   cooks command
          "does she cook rice?"
     In this sentence, "gau" marks the question about the action "tinani tina" (cook rice). The sentence "Gi tinani tina gau?" translates to "Does she cook rice?" The "gau" particle makes this a question about whether the subject will perform the cooking action.

4.   Pi   era   kumpida gau?
          We   them/OBJ   invite   command
          "do we invite them?"
     Finally, in "Pi era kumpida gau?" ("Do we invite them?"), "gau" is used to form a question about whether the action of inviting will happen. The use of "gau" here transforms the sentence into an inquiry about the action involving a specific object (them).

4.9   The Particles 'gau' and 'di' in Command Sentences"

1.   Ai   ma'u   gau di!
          You come   command
          "You come"
     In this sentence, "gau" is used to specify the object of the command (you), while "di" adds emphasis to the command. The sentence "Ai ma'u gau di!" translates to "You come!" The structure is straightforward, with both particles working together to emphasize the action of coming.

2.   Gi omii   gau di!
          s/he sit down   command
          "S/he sits down"
     Similarly, "omii" (sit down) is the verb, and "gau" specifies the object of the action, while "di" intensifies the command. The sentence "Gi omii gau di!" translates to "S/he sits down!" The two particles create a command that emphasizes the action.

3.   Era etena   gau di!
          They stand   command
          "They stand up"
     Finally, in "Era etena gau di!" ("They stand up!"), "gau" specifies the action directed at the group, and "di" reinforces the strength of the command. This sentence also follows the same structure, with both particles creating a clear and forceful imperative statement.

Conclusion And Suggestions

     The study on the Makasae language has provided valuable insights into the role of particles in shaping sentence structure and meaning. The findings reveal that particles like "ara," "di," "gau," "apa," "tai," and others are integral to various grammatical functions in Makasae, including signaling commands, forming questions, emphasizing actions, and marking negation. The particle "ara" is used primarily to form imperative sentences, indicating commands, while "di" adds emphasis and intensity, particularly in commands and prohibitions. "Apa" and "tai" are crucial for transforming statements into questions, with "apa" indicating yes/no questions and "tai" used in interrogatives that inquire about the

subject's action. Additionally, "gau" specifies the object of the action in commands and questions, adding clarity and focus to the sentence.

The findings also highlight that these particles work together in various combinations to modify the tone, force, and intention of the sentences. For instance, the combination of "di" and "ara" intensifies the force of commands, while "di" in conjunction with "to" forms yes/no questions, and "gau" helps specify the object in both commands and questions. The study underscores the complexity of particle usage in Makasae, showing that they are not only functional but also essential for conveying pragmatic nuances in everyday communication.

Suggestions:
1. Further Exploration of the Role of Particles: Given the complexity of particle use in Makasae, future research could further examine the subtle differences in their usage in different social or cultural contexts, particularly focusing on variations in formality or tone.
2. Cross-Linguistic Comparisons: A comparative analysis of the particle system in Makasae with other related languages in Southeast Asia, especially those from the Trans-New Guinea language family, could provide deeper insights into shared grammatical structures and their evolution.
3. Language Preservation and Documentation: Since Makasae is spoken by a relatively small population, efforts to document and preserve the language, especially its unique particle system, would be crucial. This could involve recording native speakers' usage of particles in various contexts and compiling linguistic resources for future generations.
4. Language Teaching and Learning: Educational materials could be developed to assist learners in understanding the intricate role of particles in sentence formation. Emphasizing particle usage in sentence structure could enhance learners' grasp of both syntax and pragmatics in Makasae, improving both fluency and cultural understanding.

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