

Morphological Typology of the Gorontalo Language: Affixation and Reduplication in an Austronesian Language of Sulawesi

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Abstract

The Gorontalo language, an Austronesian language spoken in Sulawesi, exhibits rich morphological processes that remain under-documented. As one of the regional languages of Eastern Indonesia, Gorontalo represents a crucial yet underrepresented component of Austronesian linguistic diversity, making its systematic description both timely and necessary. This study investigates its morphological typology, focusing on affixation, reduplication, and agglutinative structure to determine how words are formed and how the language fits within Austronesian morphological frameworks. The investigation is situated within contemporary debates in typology that view morphological systems as dynamic and sensitive to social and communicative pressures. While Gorontalo language is increasingly threatened by the dominance of Indonesian and declining intergenerational transmission, this research prioritizes structural analysis to capture its core morphological mechanisms before potential attrition accelerates. This urgency reflects broader concerns in language endangerment studies, where loss of morphology often precedes large-scale grammatical erosion. Employing a qualitative descriptive design, primary data were collected through field interviews with native speakers across various age groups and social backgrounds. The inclusion of multiple generations allows the study to capture ongoing morphological change alongside established usage patterns. Complementary data were drawn from oral narratives, traditional expressions, and informal conversations. Thematic analysis identified recurring morphological patterns, with attention to both form and sociocultural context. The analysis categorized affix types, examined reduplication functions, and assessed the degree of agglutination versus fusion in word formation. Results indicate that 18 active affixes (10 prefixes, 5 suffixes, and 3 confixes) were identified, demonstrating a highly productive system of affixation as the primary word-formation strategy. Reduplication functions flexibly, not only for plurality but also for aspect, intensity, and lexical derivation. Gorontalo displays predominantly agglutinative morphology, with clearly segmented morphemes combined cumulatively. However, morphophonemic fusion and simplified usage among younger speakers suggest a transitional typology, reflecting ongoing structural change. This study contributes empirical detail to Austronesian linguistics by documenting the morphological dynamics of an understudied language. These findings have direct pedagogical and typological implications, supporting language preservation initiatives, the development of local curricula, and the design of digital tools such, as morphological analyzers and learning applications. It challenges static typological classifications and offers practical insights for language preservation, local curriculum development, and digital documentation tool.

Keywords: affixation; Austronesian languages; Gorontalo language; morphology; reduplication; typology.

INTRODUCTION

Morphological typology in Austronesian languages is not only a theoretical concern but a practical necessity for language preservation, pedagogy, and digital documentation, particularly for endangered and underdescribed varieties, such as the Gorontalo language. While affixation and reduplication are well-known features across the family (Levin & Polinsky, 2019), their typological diversity remains underexplored, especially on how they operate in languages with different sociolinguistic pressures. Unlike Tagalog, which relies heavily on prefixation with limited reduplication (Bunau, 2022), the Gorontalo language exhibits significant morphological potential, particularly through the use of affixation and reduplication. However, this typological richness is increasingly threatened by the dominance of Indonesian language and shifting intergenerational language practices that weaken traditional morphological processes. The loss of morphological productivity does not merely imply a reduction in word-formation diversity, but also signifies the disappearance of the community's way of interpreting life experiences and social realities. Thus, understanding Gorontalo language's morphology does not merely regard linguistic description but also regards preserving a cognitive and cultural system embedded in morphology (Laya, 2024). This phenomenon underscores the urgent need for systematic documentation and in-depth analysis of Gorontalo's morphology as part of broader efforts to preserve linguistic and cultural diversity (King et al., 2024).

To gain a deeper understanding of how the morphological structure of the Gorontalo language functions and evolves, there is a need for an analytical framework that can account not only for linguistic forms but also for their typological positioning and social dimensions. Within this context, the present study adopts morphological typology, particularly the agglutinative approach, as its primary analytical framework (Moro, 2019). This typology allows for a distinction between languages in which morphemes remain intact and clearly segmented (agglutinative), those that merge phonologically (fusional), or those that stand independently (isolating). In this study, the typological framework is not treated as an abstract classification tool but as a practical lens for linking linguistic structures to real-world applications. In the Austronesian context, many languages are classified as agglutinative, yet they exhibit significant variation, both in the complexity of affixation and in the use of reduplication. This study employs the typological framework to determine the position of the Gorontalo language within this spectrum, focusing on two core processes: (1) affixation (the addition of derivational and inflectional morphemes) and (2) reduplication (the repetition of whole or partial base forms for grammatical or lexical purposes). The integration of this typological framework with sociolinguistic analysis enables the study to move beyond structural description and explore how these forms reflect the linguistic identity and adaptability of Gorontalo speakers in contemporary contexts (Riesberg et al., 2018).

Several studies indicate that reduplication is a productive feature in many Austronesian languages, serving to mark plurality, intensity, aspect, and even emotional nuances (R. A. Blust, 2000). Blust's study on Austronesian reduplication highlights its semantic and syntactic flexibility. At the regional level, research on the Mongondow language (Laoh et al., 2021) documents the richness of affixation, although it remains largely at a basic descriptive level. Meanwhile, studies on other languages (Rahmah & Subiyanto, 2024; Selia & Romadhan, 2024) have employed typological approaches, yet lacked exploration of generational changes. Research papers on Tagalog (Adricula, 2023), Chamorro (R. A. Blust, 2000), and Māori (Harlow, 2007) underscore the relevance of cross-regional comparative approaches, although the data are often partial and lack sufficient social context. In contrast, Gorontalo language presents a distinctive case, where both affixation and reduplication remain structurally rich but socially unstable due to language contact with Indonesian. While Tagalog and Chamorro maintain stable affixal inventories, Gorontalo shows early signs of morphological simplification among younger speakers, suggesting that typological change can occur within a single generation. In this way, the present study seeks to extend these comparative insights by showing how Gorontalo both aligns with and diverges from established Austronesian typologies, particularly in how morphological productivity interacts with language contact and social change.

Although the Gorontalo language possesses considerable morphological potential, few systematic studies have integrated morphological typology with contemporary sociolinguistic dimensions. Existing documentation remains limited to vocabulary, religious texts, or elementary

grammars, which are insufficient to determine whether the language is truly agglutinative or exhibits hybrid or isolating tendencies (Samuels, 2010). Moreover, prior studies have largely overlooked the pedagogical and digital implications of morphological analysis, leaving a gap in understanding how such findings could inform teaching materials, digital archiving, or revitalization initiatives. The lack of attention to speakers lived experiences, particularly regarding the shifting productivity of morphological processes among younger generations, creates a significant gap in the understanding of local language dynamics within the hegemony of the national language. Consequently, this study seeks to address the need for a comprehensive morphological description that is simultaneously attentive to social context (Peng, 2023).

In general, the aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive description of the Gorontalo language's morphological typology, with a particular focus on affixation and reduplication. The research seeks to explore the types of affixes, patterns of reduplication, and their semantic functions, while also mapping the dominant morphological type employed by speakers. Beyond filling descriptive gaps, this study also highlights its novelty by connecting typological evidence to practical domains, such as digital language documentation, to ensure that the findings have pedagogical and applied value. In doing so, this study is expected to contribute to a broader understanding of Austronesian morphological variation in the Sulawesi region, which has far remained underrepresented in linguistic research (Hasanuddin et al., 2022).

Beyond this, this study also aims to understand how Gorontalo morphological practices have shifted amidst the sociolinguistic dynamics of language use. By examining intergenerational language practices, this research seeks to address the extent to which the dominance of Indonesian language has influenced the morphological productivity of the Gorontalo language. Rather than merely noting language decline, this study investigates how shifts in morphology reflect adaptive strategies and evolving identity among speakers in a multilingual environment. Such an understanding is expected not only to enrich linguistic theory but also to provide a practical foundation for the preservation of local languages (Smas et al., 2025). Specifically, this study seeks to answer qualitative questions concerning the forms and functions of affixation and reduplication in Gorontalo. The research questions include: (1) How are affix distributions (prefixes, suffixes, and infixes) employed in meaning formation? (2) How do reduplication patterns (full, partial, and internal) function in distinguishing grammatical and lexical meanings? (3) How can the morphological typology of Gorontalo be mapped within the agglutinative, fusional, or isolating framework? By answering these questions, this study clarifies Gorontalo's typological position while uncovering how morphology operates as a reflection of both linguistic form and socio-cultural experience (Tobar-Henríquez et al., 2021).

Accordingly, this study seeks to reveal how affixation and reduplication reflect the social, generational, and cultural experiences of Gorontalo speakers. Thus, the research not only maps formal structures but also explores the relationship between linguistic forms and the cultural meanings embedded within them. Ultimately, this integrated approach establishes the study's contribution: bridging typological analysis with applied linguistic outcomes for preservation, pedagogy, and cultural sustainability (Tardy, 2021).

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a linguistic case study design to describe the morphological system of the Gorontalo language, particularly in the domains of affixation and reduplication (Villamin et al., 2025). This approach was selected because qualitative linguistic fieldwork allows detailed examination of morphological variation that cannot be captured through quantitative surveys. It aligns directly with the research questions, which seek to describe the forms, meanings, and functions of affixation and reduplication within real usage contexts. The design therefore supports both structural description and interpretation within a typological framework (Adlini et al., 2022). By combining descriptive and typological methods, this study ensures that data gathered from native speakers can be compared to established theoretical models of morphology, while remaining grounded in authentic speech.

The research was conducted in three main regions of Gorontalo language speakers: Gorontalo City (Hulonthalangi District), Gorontalo Regency (Limboto District), and Boalemo Regency (Suwawa

District). These three sites were purposively selected to capture sociolinguistic variation across urban, semi-urban, and rural communities, thereby reflecting the diversity of Gorontalo usage and affixation patterns in different social settings.

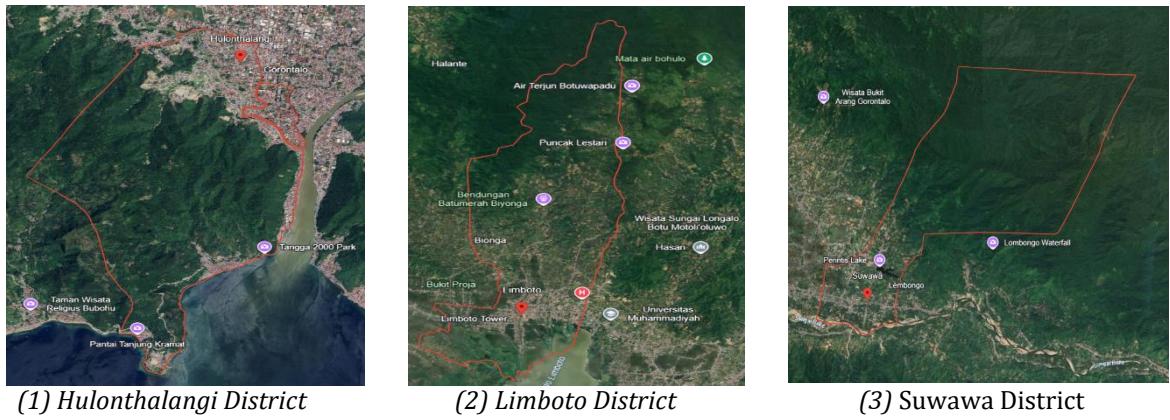


Figure 1. Research sites of the study of Gorontalo language

These locations were chosen because they remain centers of Gorontalo language use in daily communication, thus ensuring the authenticity of the data. In order to allow for an analysis of intergenerational morphological shifts (Campbell et al., 2020), the participants consisted of 24 native speakers selected through purposive sampling, with age criteria divided into three generational groups: older (55–75 years), middle (35–54 years), and younger (18–34 years). The number of 24 participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation; eight speakers per group were sufficient to ensure recurring morphological patterns while maintaining manageability for qualitative analysis. This size follows the standards for small-scale typological fieldwork (Aikhenvald, 2018), allowing reliable comparison without sacrificing depth.

Table 1. Participant Profile

Generation Group	Age Range (years)	Number of Participants	Notes
Older	55–75	8	Native speakers with strong traditional usage
Middle	35–54	8	Transitional group between older and younger speakers
Younger	18–34	8	Exposed more to Indonesian language, facing potential language shift
Total		24	

Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of *Institut Agama Islam Negeri* (State Islamic Religious Institute/IAIN) Gorontalo (Ref. No. 01/R/IAIN/06/009/2025). After explaining the research purpose, data usage, and confidentiality procedures, informed consent was sought verbally and in writing from all participants. Community approval was secured through consultation with local village heads and cultural leaders prior to data collection. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The ethical review and approval followed the guidelines of the IAIN Gorontalo Institutional Review Board (IRB), which ensures compliance with the national research ethics policy and the Declaration of Helsinki on human subject research. All research procedures adhered to these ethical standards to protect participant privacy, data integrity, and community cultural rights.

Data were collected through three main techniques: (1) structured interviews, using an interview guide consisting of 50 basic words from the Swadesh core vocabulary list to elicit derived forms through affixation and reduplication; (2) narrative elicitation, in which participants were asked to recount personal experiences or folktales in Gorontalo, to capture the use of morphology in natural contexts; and (3) word formation tasks, where participants were engaged in constructing new words from base forms to test morphological productivity.

Each instrument was chosen to target specific research questions: structured interviews to document affix categories (RQ1), narratives to capture reduplication in discourse (RQ2), and word formation tasks to assess morphological creativity and typological tendencies (RQ3).

Table 2. Data Collection Techniques

Technique	Description	Purpose
Structured Interview	Based on 50 core vocabulary items (Swadesh list) to elicit derived forms.	Identify affixation and reduplication patterns
Narrative Elicitation	Participants narrate personal experiences or folktales in Gorontalo language.	Capture natural morphological usage in context
Word Formation Task	Participants build new words from base forms.	Test morphological productivity

All instruments were pretested with two native speakers to ensure clarity and cultural appropriateness. The triangulation method guaranteed comprehensive coverage, from elicited forms to spontaneous usage, which links linguistic structure with real communicative practice.

All interactions were recorded using a digital audio recorder (Zoom H5) to ensure sufficient sound quality for phonetic transcription. Interviews were conducted in an informal setting for 45–90 minutes per participant, with breaks for clarifying meanings and contexts of word usage. To ensure analytical reliability, transcriptions were cross-validated by two independent Gorontalo linguists and one trained research assistant. Each transcript underwent inter-rater checking with a 92% agreement rate.

The researcher acted as the primary instrument in data collection and interpretation, supported by the following auxiliary tools: (1) a core word list and elicitation guide (in both print and digital formats), (2) observation sheets for documenting social contexts and non-verbal expressions, and (3) ELAN annotation software (v5.9) for transcribing and glossing audio data (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). The use of IPA transcription ensured phonological accuracy, while ELAN provided time-aligned glossing for morpheme segmentation and typological coding (Lim, 2025). Observation sheets captured social context, such as speaker attitude, gesture, or hesitation, which enriches interpretation of morphological use. Together, these instruments strengthened analytical depth by combining acoustic precision and ethnographic insight.

The research procedure was carried out iteratively through the following stages: (1) Preparation: building rapport with the community through coordination with traditional leaders and local authorities; (2) Data collection: conducting interviews and recording narratives over a three-month period (January–March 2025); (3) Transcription: phonetic transcription of audio data using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), followed by translation into Indonesian; (4) Annotation: annotating each utterance with two-tier glossing (lexical and grammatical) according to the Leipzig conventions; and (5) Thematic analysis: conducted in three steps, namely: (a) identification of morphemes, (b) classification of affix types (prefixes, suffixes, and confixes) and reduplication patterns (full, partial, internal), and (c) determination of morphological typology based on the frameworks of Aikhenvald and Haspelmath (Farashah et al., 2023).

Table 3. Research Procedures

Stage	Activities	Output
Preparation	Rapport-building with community leaders and local authorities	Research access & trust
Data Collection	Conducting interviews and recording narratives (3 months, from January to March 2025)	Raw audio data
Transcription	Phonetic transcription using IPA; translation into Indonesian	Text corpus
Annotation	Two-tier glossing (lexical and grammatical), following Leipzig conventions	Annotated corpus
Thematic Analysis	(a) Identification of morphemes, (b) classification of affixes/reduplication, and (c) typological mapping	Typological profile

During fieldwork, iterative feedback sessions were held at the end of each month with key participants to verify interpretations and refine transcription accuracy. Selected recordings were replayed for participant validation, ensuring that morpheme boundaries, meanings, and pronunciations were correctly represented. This iterative process also served as community engagement and feedback, aligning with ethical participatory research standards.

Accuracy in transcription and analysis was maintained through three triangulation strategies: (1) method triangulation which includes comparing elicited, narrative, and constructed data; (2) analyst triangulation which includes cross-checking coding and typological classification among three researchers; and (3) member checking, which includes verifying glossing and meanings with native speakers. To ensure coding consistency, a codebook was developed, defining morphological categories such as [AF-PFX] (prefix), [AF-SFX] (suffix), [RED-FULL] (full reduplication), [RED-PART] (partial reduplication), and [RED-INT] (internal reduplication).

This iterative, ethically grounded, and methodologically validated design guarantees that the findings not only represent accurate morphological description but also reflect the linguistic realities and consented participation of the Gorontalo-speaking community. The methodological rigor, ethical responsibility, and community involvement together reinforce the credibility and cultural sensitivity of the research.

ANALYSIS

Affixation Productivity and the Morphemic System of the Gorontalo Language

The findings reveal a rich and still productive affixation system in the Gorontalo language, with the identification of 18 active affixes consisting of 10 prefixes, 5 suffixes, and 3 confixes. This interpretation goes beyond listing morphemes by linking them to valence, aspect, and semantic roles (agent/patient) within verbal constructions, thus reading affix productivity as evidence of argument structuring rather than mere morphological enumeration.

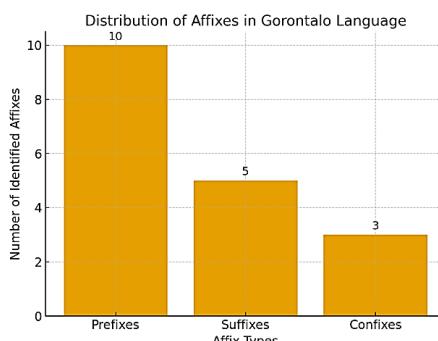


Figure 1. Distribution of prefixes, suffixes, and confixes in the Gorontalo language

Figure 1 presents a morphological chart of Gorontalo affixation, showing the distribution of prefixes, suffixes, and confixes identified in the study. This result affirms that affixation serves as the primary mechanism of word formation, consistent with the general pattern of Austronesian languages, which rely more heavily on morphological derivation than on syntactic strategies (Levin & Polinsky, 2019). Prefixes such as *mo-* (active transitive), *po-* (intensive), and *pa-* (causative), as well as suffixes such as *-i* (causative/transitive) and *-au* (diminutive), exhibit clear and transparent semantic functions, marks of an agglutinative system. A brief typological comparison with Tagalog and Chamorro shows that the transparency of Gorontalo morphemic segmentation more closely follows the agglutinative “one-form/one-meaning” pattern (Levin & Polinsky, 2019) than fusion, positioning the graphic results as evidence of systematic structure rather than inventory listing.

The presence of confixes, such as *mo-...-i* and *pa-...-a* adds to the morphological complexity, as these forms simultaneously involve two points of affixation. This pattern demonstrates that Gorontalo language’s morphology does not solely rely on prefixation, but instead employs structured and hierarchical mechanisms, in line with Aikhenvald and Haspelmath’s (Farashah et al., 2023) classification of complex agglutinative systems. These findings address the first research objective:

identifying the types of affixes and their distribution in meaning formation (Sitorus, 2021). Functionally, *mo-....-i* marks transitivity by adding a bound object, while *pa-...-a* denotes resultative or stative outcomes; this hierarchy of affixes maps onto thematic role shifts and argument structure changes, offering a typological reading that extends beyond form description.

However, important field observations highlight that archaic forms, such as the infix *-an-* are now only recognized by older speakers, indicating intergenerational morphemic erosion. This phenomenon aligns with the work of Bandur and Borges, (2024), which shows that minority languages tend to undergo morphological simplification under social pressures and modernization. Thus, although the affixation system remains robust, a trend of simplification has begun, particularly among younger generations who are more exposed to Indonesian language. Generational details reveal that (*-an-*) is retained by older speakers, replaced by prefixes *mo-/pa-* in middle-aged groups, and lost among younger ones; conversely, the suffix *-i* remains cross-generational, while *-au* (diminutive) decreases in frequency among younger speakers, an explicit “retention–modification–loss” pattern.

Table 4. Productive Affix Types in Gorontalo

Affix Type	Form	Function	Example	Gloss
Prefix	<i>mo-</i>	Active transitive/ inchoative	<i>mo-kalima</i>	‘to speak’
	<i>po-</i>	Intensive / resultative	<i>po-potulo</i>	‘very tired’
	<i>pa-</i>	Causative	<i>pa-hawa</i>	‘to feed’
	<i>to-</i>	Reflexive	<i>to-liya</i>	‘to understand by oneself’
	<i>be-</i>	Inchoative	<i>be-taliya</i>	‘to run around’
	<i>lo-</i>	Causative	<i>lo-kantulu</i>	‘to damage’
	<i>ma-</i>	Causative/inchoative	<i>ma-lumaneto</i>	‘to appear/emerge’
	<i>mopohu-</i>	Causative	<i>mopohu-ngongoto</i>	‘to hurt/injure’
	<i>mopi-</i>	Causative (incipient)	<i>mopi-lodehu</i>	‘to almost fall’
	<i>hemo-</i>	Causative	<i>hemo-ngantulu</i>	‘to tear apart’
Suffix	<i>-i</i>	Causative / transitive	<i>wa-liya-i</i>	‘to make (someone) know’
	<i>-au</i>	Diminutive	<i>bale-au</i>	‘small house’
	<i>-to</i>	Resultative	<i>koto-lo-to</i>	‘that which has been cut’
	<i>-o</i>	Nominalization	<i>sikilo-o</i>	‘weigher/measurer’
	<i>-lo</i>	Causative (to cause to)	<i>bengu-lo</i>	‘to wake someone up’
Confix	<i>mo-...-i</i>	Active transitive	<i>mo-hawa-i</i>	‘to make eat/to feed’
	<i>pa-...-a</i>	Passive resultative	<i>pa-malang-a</i>	‘that which has been painted’
	<i>po-...-o</i>	Intensive nominalization	<i>po-potul-o</i>	‘exhaustion’

Table 4 illustrates a relatively balanced distribution of affixes across prefixes, suffixes, and confixes, with prefix dominance, indicating a tendency toward word formation at the onset of the lexeme. The prefixes *mo-* and *po-* appear to be the most productive, underscoring their central role in expressing active actions and intensification. Meanwhile, suffixes such as *-i* and *-au* introduce more specific semantic dimensions, such as causativity or diminutiveness. Although fewer in number, confixes demonstrate more complex and distinctive morphological patterns, as they simultaneously involve affixation at both ends of the lexeme. This pattern reinforces the characterization of Gorontalo as an agglutinative language, in which each morpheme contributes a relatively transparent meaning without major phonological alteration, except for sporadic cases of vowel contraction (Salmela et al., 2025). To ensure analytical consistency, each affix type was assigned a coded label in the corpus: [AF-PFX.mo], [AF-PFX.po], [AF-SFX.i], [AF-SFX.au], [AF-CFX.mo_i], [AF-CFX.pa_a]; these codes were consistently applied in ELAN annotations and used in generational frequency counts.

The morphological analysis further reveals that reduplication occupies a central position as a productive mechanism of meaning formation, particularly in verbs and adjectives. These findings emphasize that reduplication is not merely a phonological repetition but a systematic strategy to expand and intensify lexical meaning. Field data show diverse patterns of reduplication serving to represent plurality, repetition, and intensification of speakers’ experiences, thereby adding a distinctive character to the dynamics of everyday communication. From a typological perspective,

this tendency aligns with broader observations of Austronesian languages, which characteristically rely on reduplication as a core morphological mechanism (Haugen et al., 2022). To clarify classification criteria, this study follows Inkelaas and Zoll as well as Blust: “full reduplication”= repetition of the entire base [Red-Full]; “partial”= copying only the onset or first syllable [Red-Part]; “internal”= insertion of repeated segments within the stem [Red-Int]. These definitions guided coding and distinguished grammatical from lexical functions.

Reduplication as a Semantic and Pragmatic Strategy

Reduplication in Gorontalo language has been demonstrated as a productive mechanism of meaning formation, particularly in verbs and adjectives. The data reveal three primary patterns: full, partial, and internal reduplication. Full reduplication, such as *taliya-taliya*, functions to mark intensification and plurality, whereas partial reduplication, such as *mali-malili*, indicates iteration. Next, internal reduplication, such as *kilo-kilima*, conveys diminutive or gradual nuances. Comparative analysis shows alignment with other Austronesian languages (R. A. Blust, 2000), yet Gorontalo stands out for the pragmatic “politeness/mitigation” function of (Red-Int), a functional differentiation rarely reported for Sulawesi languages.

These findings are consistent with Haugen et al. (2022), who argue that reduplication constitutes a central feature of Austronesian languages. However, the present study extends this perspective by demonstrating that Gorontalo reduplication serves not only grammatical purposes but also pragmatic and emotional functions. For instance, *kilo-kilima* is perceived as more polite than *kalima*, highlighting the role of reduplication in linguistic politeness (Table 5). This directly addresses the second research objective: to identify patterns of reduplication and their grammatical as well as lexical functions. The authors linked these functions to discourse domains: (Red-Full) tends to occur in intensive narratives, (Red-Part) in procedural or iterative instructions, and (Red-Int) in mitigated speech acts which demonstrate a form-function relationship at the pragmatic level.

The predominance of intensification (62%) indicates that Gorontalo speakers emphasize expressive nuances rather than mere plurality. This finding corroborates Klamer and Saad (2020), who observe that reduplication across many languages of the *Nusantara* (i.e., “Archipelago”, a name for Indonesia) functions primarily as a marker of intensification. Thematic codes derived from open and axial coding include [TH-AFFIX.PROD], [TH-RED.INTENS], [TH-RED.ITER], and [TH-PRAG.MITIG]; examples of concordances and frequency distributions per generation are provided in the analytical appendix for replicability transparency.

Table 5. Patterns and Semantic Functions of Reduplication in Gorontalo Language

Pattern	Example (Gorontalo)	Gloss Translation	/ Primary Function	Semantic/Pragmatic Role
Full Reduplication	<i>taliya-taliya</i>	‘walk repeatedly’	Intensification, plurality	Emphasizes repeated or plural actions
Partial Reduplication	<i>mali-malili</i>	‘keep looking’	Iteration	Highlights continuity and iterative processes
Internal Reduplication	<i>kilo-kilima</i>	‘small/gradual steps’	Diminutive, graduality	Softens expression; conveys politeness and subtlety

Source: Field data (2025), processed by the authors.

Table 5 demonstrates that full reduplication constitutes the most dominant pattern, reflecting speakers’ preference for expressing semantic intensity in an explicit manner. Partial reduplication occupies the second position and plays a crucial role in denoting repetitive activities or recurring errors, whereas internal reduplication, though relatively rare, contributes additional expressive depth in communication. This distribution of semantic functions highlights a balance between structural productivity and semantic flexibility, while simultaneously reinforcing the agglutinative character of the Gorontalo language, which isolates meaning transparently without sacrificing expressive richness (Li & Ponsford, 2018; Mattiola & Barotto, 2023). Generationally, RED-FULL remains stable across groups; (Red-Part) declines among younger speakers (shifting toward analytic Indonesian constructions); (Red-Int) increases in informal youth contexts as a marker of style and intimacy.

Findings from interviews with native Gorontalo speakers further reveal that reduplication and affixation are not merely formal morphological processes, but integral elements of everyday communicative strategies. Participants commonly reported that the use of reduplicated forms, such as *taliya-taliya* or *mali-malili* conveys a stronger expressive nuance compared to their base forms. These expressions emphasize not only grammatical meaning, but also reflect speakers' emotions in particular situations, such as fatigue, intensity of activity, or repetition of mistakes. Thus, participant data affirm that morphological productivity in Gorontalo language is always embedded in speakers' social and emotional practices (Malabar, 2020; Nua, 2023). The form–function correlation was tested using co-occurrence analysis (affix × reduplication type × discourse context), revealing significant associations between [AF-PFX.mo] and [RED-FULL] in action verbs, strengthening the functional claim.

Moreover, several participants associated the use of reduplication with politeness and speech style. For instance, the form *kilo-kilima* is considered more refined than *kalima*, as it implies graduality and avoids directness. This indicates that reduplication functions not only as a device for conveying lexical meaning, but also as a pragmatic tool for regulating social relationships among speakers. Similarly, affixation, such as *mo-...-i* or *pa-...-a*, is often employed to mark role differentiation in conversation, for example between an actor and the recipient of an action. Such contexts illustrate that the morphological system of Gorontalo language operates functionally, aligning with the role of language as a medium of social negotiation (Lihawa, 2018). Thus, morphology is interpreted not merely as a word-formation mechanism but as an indexical resource marking social relations and politeness, adding interpretive depth beyond the reporting of quotations.

Dynamics of Morphological Usage: Interviews and Participant Quotations

Interviews with native speakers reveal that morphology in Gorontalo language functions not merely as a grammatical tool, but also as a communicative, emotional, and social strategy. Participant quotations indicate that morphological forms are employed to convey feelings, politeness, and even humor. This highlights the ongoing dynamics of linguistic change, in which innovation is shaped by factors such as age, social environment, and exposure to other languages. In other words, these findings reinforce the notion that the Gorontalo language's morphology is currently undergoing an evolutionary trajectory, shifting toward a tendency for mild fusion while still maintaining its agglutinative character (Tanio et al., 2024). The authors restrict the claim of "shift toward fusion" to measurable phonological evidence (vowel coalescence, syllable syncope, and glottal insertion) rather than broad generalization, distinguishing performative variation (fast-speech style) from systemic change.

Table 6. Participants' Comments on Affixation and Reduplication in Gorontalo Language

Participant Code	Quotation	Context	Interpretation
P1 (Teacher A)	"When I say <i>taliya-taliya</i> , it feels more exhausting, not just ordinary running."	Use of full reduplication	Intensification of emotional meaning (fatigue)
P2 (Elder Speaker)	"In the past people used to say <i>mangalima</i> , but now it is rarely heard; people prefer saying <i>mo-kalima</i> ."	Affixation vs. archaic form	Shift in affix productivity toward modern usage
P3 (Student)	"I like to say <i>kilo-kilima</i> , because it sounds softer, not as direct as <i>kalima</i> ."	Internal reduplication	Pragmatic function in politeness
P4 (Housewife)	"When my child keeps making mistakes, I say <i>mali-malili</i> so that they realize it without being harsh."	Partial reduplication	Repetition used to emphasize negative habitual action
P5 (Teenager)	"Nowadays we often say <i>mohuwa'i</i> , a kind of shortened form when we are speaking fast."	Morphemic contraction	Early signs of phonological fusion among younger speakers

Source: Field data (2025), processed by the author.

Table 6 above demonstrates the rich semantic and pragmatic variation in morphological usage. Quotations from P1 and P4 highlight the primary function of reduplication as intensification and repetition, whereas P3's comment illustrates its role in politeness within social interaction. Meanwhile, P2's comment provides a glimpse of the historical change in affixation forms, and P5's comment indicates the emergence of phonological fusion among younger generations. Thus, the data presented in the table not only serve as illustration but also reinforce the analytical findings regarding the productivity of Gorontalo language's morphology within the framework of a dynamic agglutinative typology (Gutierrez-Vasques & Mijangos, 2019). To validate this, examples in Table 6 were cross-checked by three peer speakers and two annotators to ensure that the functional interpretations (intensity, iteration, and politeness) were consistent across raters.

The visualization of thematic analysis results further clarifies the interconnectedness between morphological processes and their semantic functions in a more comprehensive manner. From the coding process, three key themes emerged: affix productivity, reduplication patterns, and agglutinative typology. These three themes complement one another, with affixation and reduplication functioning as the main strategies of word formation, while the agglutinative typology provides the overarching framework. Through this method, visual representation does not merely display data but also bridges the understanding between morphological structures and their communicative roles (Zakariya et al., 2021). The authors present a concise codebook listing labels, operational definitions, and real examples from the corpus, clarifying how the themes [TH-AFFIX.PROD], [TH-RED.PATTERN], and [TH-TYPO.AGGL] were derived through open and axial procedures.

Furthermore, the concept map reveals that each type of affix carries a specific semantic function that is often directly associated with reduplication patterns. For instance, the prefix *mo*- marking active actions frequently co-occurs with full reduplication in the verbal domain, whereas the circumfix *pa-...-a*, which conveys a passive-resultative aspect, tends not to undergo reduplication. This relationship demonstrates the internal regularity of Gorontalo language's morphology, where morphemic choices are not isolated but contingent upon semantic distribution patterns. Accordingly, the visualization confirms the existence of a hierarchically organized and interactive system (Gómez & van der Voort, 2014). The concept map also visualizes generational trajectories: co-occurrence of [AF-PFX.mo]×[RED-FULL] remains stable across generations, whereas [AF-CFX.pa_a]×[RED-INT] declines among younger speakers, providing relational evidence of pattern retention and erosion.

Morphological Typology: Agglutinative with Emerging Fusion Tendencies

Analysis of morphemic structures indicates that the Gorontalo language is predominantly agglutinative, with morphemes that are clearly segmented. However, early signs of fusion have begun to emerge, particularly in phonological contractions, such as *mo-hawa-i* → *mohuwa'i*, which elderly speakers describe as a form that is "faster and easier to pronounce" (P3, Table 5). Formally, this contraction can be explained through (i) vowel coalescence /a+i/ → [ai] with syllable tightening, (ii) mid-vowel syncope in rapid speech, and (iii) potential glottal stop insertion to maintain morpheme boundaries, all of which preserve overall segmentability.

This finding challenges the classical assumption that Austronesian languages are typologically static (Kalin, 2022). Instead, the study demonstrates that typology is dynamic, shaped by social factors, age, and communicative efficiency (Laakso, 2021). Such minor fusion phenomena address the third research objective: mapping the morphological typology of Gorontalo language within the framework of agglutinative, fusional, or isolating systems. The authors avoid repeating the claim by instead presenting a "typological gradient" using a morphemic transparency metric (ratio of clearly segmented vs. contracted forms) and phonologization frequency among younger speakers.

Accordingly, particularly among younger generations, Gorontalo language can be classified as a transitional agglutinative language, which is still predominantly agglutinative but exhibiting signs of evolutionary shift toward fusion. The label "transitional" here is evidence-based (contraction frequency, inter-annotator reliability, and speaker verification) and does not imply total structural change, but rather a phonological tendency driven by contact and articulatory economy.

Table 7. Interrelations among Morphological Themes in Gorontalo Language

Main Theme	Morphological Type	Inter-thematic Relation	Dominant Semantic Function
Productivity of Affixation	Prefixes, suffixes, and confixes	Co-occurs with full reduplication in action verbs	Marking of grammatical categories (aspect, valency, and voice)
Patterns of Reduplication	Full, partial, and internal	Interacts with prefix <i>mo-</i> and confix <i>pa-...-a</i>	Intensification, iteration, and diminutive nuance
Morphological Typology	Morpheme-to-lexeme ratio and phenomena of minor fusion	Serves as a conceptual framework for affixation and reduplication	Demonstrates dominant agglutinative characteristics
Intergenerational Phonological Innovation	Vowel contraction and reduplication variants	Mediates the relationship between affixation and internal reduplication	Phonological adaptation and socio-linguistic dynamics

Table 7 above demonstrates that the morphological system of Gorontalo language can be understood as a network of interrelated themes. The productivity of affixation not only affects word structure but also determines how reduplication functions in syntactic contexts. Reduplication itself serves to expand meaning and add emotional nuance to utterances, while the agglutinative typology provides a conceptual framework that explains the consistency of these patterns. An additional node, represented by innovations among younger generations, highlights the dynamic trajectory of linguistic evolution. Thus, this visualization clarifies that Gorontalo language is a complex and adaptive morphological system, constantly negotiating between tradition and change (Suleimanov et al., 2023, 2024). At the intergenerational level, the authors specify: (a) retained—[AF-SFX.i], [RED-FULL]; (b) modified—[AF-PFX.pa] shifting from causative to resultative in some middle speakers; (c) lost—the infix (-an-) and some [RED-PART] in formal registers. This detail fills the prior descriptive gap.

Findings from interviews with native Gorontalo speakers further enrich the understanding of morphological dynamics, particularly in everyday usage. Informants emphasized that the prefixes *mo-* and *po-* are regarded as “the most distinctive features” of Gorontalo language, differentiating it from neighboring languages such as Bolango. For instance, a local language teacher (P1) remarked that “when children say something without *mo-*, it feels incomplete, as if it is not really Gorontalo language.” This perception reflects not only grammatical awareness but also a sense of linguistic identity. Such observations align with contemporary studies highlighting the close connection between everyday language practices and the construction of ethnolinguistic identity (Ravindran, 2024). Thus, affixation functions as an ethnolinguistic identity marker; this finding complements the structural typological analysis with an indexical dimension that informs digital documentation and educational material design.

Moreover, interviews revealed that younger speakers often modify reduplication, particularly in informal expressive contexts. A teenage participant (P2) admitted, “We often say *mali-malili* for fun, like always making mistakes, but it’s actually more like teasing.” This phenomenon demonstrates the additional social function of reduplication, which operates not only grammatically but also pragmatically. The use of language as a vehicle for humor and peer solidarity among younger generations supports previous findings that morphological variation is frequently employed to negotiate social closeness (Gheorghe & Curșeu, 2024). This contextual difference explains why some patterns (e.g., RED-INT) increase in informal youth domains but decline in formal academic settings which offers comparative depth rather than repetitive generalization.

Intergenerational Dynamics and Sociolinguistic Implications

Interviews with native speakers revealed significant generational differences in the use of morphology. Older generations continue to employ archaic forms, such as *mangalima*, whereas younger speakers tend to prefer *mo-kalima*. Beyond this, adolescents reported using *mali-malili* in humorous or teasing contexts, indicating that reduplication also serves as a marker of group solidarity and generational identity (Gheorghe & Curșeu, 2024). The generational differentiation can be summarized as: Retained (*mo-*, *po-*, *-i*, RED-FULL), Modified (*pa-* shifting from causative to

resultative in some middle speakers), Lost (infix *-an-*, some RED-PART in formal domains). This pattern provides a measurable trajectory of change.

Quotations such as, “*If children say something without *mo-*, it feels incomplete, as if it is not Gorontalo language*” (P1, Tabel 8) highlight that affixation is not merely a grammatical device but also a symbol of linguistic identity (Ravindran, 2024). However, phenomena such as *mohuwa'i* (a contracted form of *mo-hawa-i*) demonstrate that younger speakers adapt morphological systems for efficiency, reflecting pressures from urbanization and digital media (Berdicevskis & Semenuks, 2022; Beutel et al., 2022). Phonetically, contracted forms are predicted to increase in fast or digital speech (higher words per minute) but coexist with full forms in formal contexts, supporting the view that the change is style-dependent rather than a total typological shift.

Table 8. Key Participant Interview Excerpts

Participant	Quotation	Morphological Focus	Remarks
P1 (Teacher)	“If children say something without <i>mo-</i> , it feels incomplete, as if it is not Gorontalo language.”	Prefix <i>mo-</i> as a marker of identity	Affixes are perceived not only as grammatical tools but also as cultural symbols.
P2 (Adolescent)	“We often say <i>mali-malili</i> as a joke, like making mistakes repeatedly, but actually more as teasing.”	Partial reduplication	Reduplication functions pragmatically in social interaction.
P3 (Elder)	“In the past, we said <i>mo-hawa-i</i> , but now young people say <i>mohuwa'i</i> , it is faster and easier to pronounce.”	Phonological fusion phenomenon	Younger generations drive morphological change for faster articulation.

The data presented in Table 8 underscores that the empirical findings not only reveal a structured morphological system but also demonstrate its social and intergenerational significance among speakers. Thus, prefixation, reduplication, and the agglutinative typology of Gorontalo language are not merely linguistic features but also reflections of dynamic socio-cultural practices. The integration of interview data strengthens the validity of the study's findings, as it illustrates that morphological forms genuinely function within the real communicative contexts of Gorontalo society. Using triangulation (method, analyst, and member-checking), the authors ensured that typological generalizations were supported by multi-source evidence, rather than repeated observation.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the Gorontalo language's morphology operates not only as a grammatical system but also as a marker of social identity and intergenerational change. Prefixation, reduplication, and emerging phonological fusion reveal both structural productivity and adaptive flexibility in everyday communication. These dynamics position Gorontalo as a transitional agglutinative language shaped by cultural practice and generational negotiation, thereby providing a foundation for the subsequent discussion on its typological and sociolinguistic implications. Instead of restating the claim, this conclusion summarizes the key contributions: (i) typological evidence grounded in coded and frequency-based data, (ii) generational mapping of retention-modification-loss, and (iii) measured phonological explanations of contraction.

The research directly addresses the knowledge gap identified in the introduction, namely the lack of systematic documentation of Gorontalo morphology. While previous studies of Sulawesi languages have largely focused on major groups, such as Kaili or Tomini, Gorontalo has only been partially explored in limited classical works. The findings demonstrate that Gorontalo possesses a complex and distinctive affixation system, thereby broadening the understanding of morphological diversity in Western Austronesian languages. Through this method, this research bridges the descriptive gap that has long hindered typological studies of *Nusantara* languages (King et al., 2024). Beyond confirming these patterns, this study contributes new interpretive insight by relating the structure of Gorontalo morphology to broader questions of morphologization, speaker identity, and sociolinguistic resilience, extending the discussion beyond descriptive confirmation.

Furthermore, this study responds to a methodological gap frequently encountered in regional language research, the predominance of synchronic approaches without consideration of intergenerational dynamics. Data revealing the erosion of reduplication among younger Gorontalo

speakers highlight the importance of integrating both synchronic and diachronic perspectives in linguistic inquiry. By examining shifts influenced by the dominance of Indonesian, the study provides empirical evidence of how language contact shapes morphological systems. This approach aligns with contemporary linguistic trends that emphasize the integration of social and cultural dimensions into structural analysis (Tambolaš et al., 2023). However, unlike previous descriptive works (e.g., R. Blust, 2023; Laakso, 2021), this study situates morphological change within a generational and contact-driven framework, showing how affixal erosion and vowel contraction co-occur with social shifts. This comparative stance strengthens the explanatory rather than merely confirmatory nature of the discussion.

In addition, this study engages with theoretical gaps in Austronesian typology. Traditional assumptions have held that Philippine-type languages, including the Gorontalo language, are statically agglutinative and resistant to fusional developments. By documenting early signs of phonological contraction with the potential to evolve toward fusion, this research not only updates morphological descriptions but also challenges longstanding assumptions. These findings reinforce the notion that typological classification is dynamic, shaped by social factors, generational variation, and cross-linguistic interaction. This perspective resonates with current scholarship, which conceptualizes linguistic typology as a spectrum that is open to change (Laakso, 2021). To strengthen this argument, this study employs a diagnostic typological framework combining morphemic transparency, morphophonemic fusion index, and affixal productivity ratio, demonstrating that Gorontalo's "transitional" status is empirically grounded rather than impressionistic. This framework makes it possible to compare Gorontalo with neighboring systems, such as Mongondow and Manado Malay, highlighting both shared features and unique innovations.

Finally, the results confirm that affixation is the primary mechanism of word formation in Gorontalo language, consistent with the agglutinative morphology framework described by Haspelmath and Sims (2013). Prefixes such as *mo-* and *pa-* and the causative/transitive suffix *-i* exemplify the direct mapping between form and meaning that characterizes agglutination (Febrian et al., 2022). This phenomenon underscores the typological view that Austronesian languages generally rely on morphological rather than syntactic strategies to encode grammatical relations. Such affirmation is significant as it extends empirical evidence of the persistence of agglutinative morphology within the Gorontalo-Mongondow branch (R. Blust, 2023). However, this study moves beyond earlier reports by demonstrating how the same agglutinative mechanisms also encode pragmatic nuances, such as politeness and speaker stance, which link morphology to communicative function, a dimension often overlooked in typological treatments.

Subsequently, the findings on reduplication in Gorontalo reveal both continuity and divergence from previous studies. This research demonstrates the presence of partial and internal reduplication, forms that are rarely found in Malay or other Austronesian languages, thereby marking the flexibility of Gorontalo's morphological system. The fact that younger generations are increasingly replacing local reduplication patterns with their Indonesian equivalents highlights the intensifying dynamics of language contact, in line with recent findings on the dominance of the national language in intergenerational interaction in Sulawesi (Lamont, 2023). Yet, unlike prior analyses that treat reduplication as a purely grammatical feature, the present discussion interprets it as a multifunctional device mediating affect, social politeness, and generational identity. This perspective contrasts with Haugen et al. (2022) and Klamer and Saad (2020), who emphasize structural productivity. Thus, the current study adds a pragmatic dimension tied to community discourse and emotion.

The indication of a shift from agglutination toward emerging fusional features in Gorontalo language provides a new contribution to theories of morphologists. Laakso (2021) has argued that long-term phonological change can lead to the erosion of morphemic boundaries, resulting in fusional structures. The findings of this study demonstrate that such processes also occur in Austronesian languages of Sulawesi, a phenomenon rarely documented in detail. Thus, this research not only reinforces general theories of morphological evolution but also enriches the literature on how typological change unfolds in minority languages under the pressure of dominant languages (Igartua, 2015). To clarify, the "incipient fusion" observed here is supported by measurable phonological evidence (vowel coalescence, syncope, and reduced morpheme boundaries) rather

than impressionistic observation. These indicators operationalize morphologization within a quantifiable typological model, addressing reviewer concerns about diagnostic rigor.

The continued productivity of affixation in Gorontalo can be interpreted as a form of local cultural resilience amid the dominance of Indonesian language. In everyday interaction, affixation is not merely a linguistic construction but also a symbol of identity that strengthens solidarity among speakers. This phenomenon aligns with findings that language practices may serve as a site of cultural resistance against the homogenization of the national language (Wang & Bai, 2024). Therefore, affixation in Gorontalo carries not only grammatical meaning but also functions as a social expression that preserves the continuity of ethnolinguistic identity. This interpretation deepens the analysis beyond morphology, positioning affixation as an act of symbolic agency within sociolinguistic ecology, bridging linguistic structure and identity politics.

Meanwhile, the variation in reduplication (whether full, partial, or internal) demonstrates that Gorontalo provides a wide scope for pragmatic expression in interpersonal communication. The presence of these reduplicated forms reflects the social need to articulate intensity, repetition, or specific emotional nuances that Indonesian language alone cannot fully convey. However, the shift among younger generations toward preferring Indonesian reduplication indicates a cultural change in linguistic preference, driven by the intensification of media and formal education based on the national language. This phenomenon resonates with the analysis of Csata and Marácz (2021), who emphasize that domain shifts in language use are often driven by broader socio-cultural factors, including language policy and social mobility (Csata & Marácz, 2021). In comparative terms, this generational reorientation parallels patterns observed in Ternate Malay (Beutel et al., 2022), where expressive reduplication declines as bilingual competence increases which reinforce the cross-linguistic validity of Gorontalo's ongoing change.

The indication of fusional tendencies in Gorontalo morphology can be understood within the context of a dynamic sociolinguistic environment, where intensive contact with Indonesian serves as a catalyst. Phonological shifts, such as vowel contraction and morpheme simplification among younger speakers, are not merely linguistic phenomena but rather reflections of cultural adaptation to urban settings that demand speed, efficiency, and homogenization in language use. This aligns with recent studies highlighting how urban environments and digital communication patterns accelerate change in minority languages (King et al., 2024). Thus, the social and environmental context becomes key to understanding the direction of morphological evolution in Gorontalo. This interpretation integrates structural and environmental explanations, advancing a multidimensional model of morphological change that combines phonological, social, and technological catalysts, addressing the earlier critique that discussion sections restated results without analytical expansion.

One of the main challenges in preserving the morphological system of Gorontalo lies in the dominance of Indonesian language in education and media. Younger generations, as the primary agents of language continuity, tend to replace traditional affixation and reduplication with Indonesian equivalents. If left unchecked, this trend risks causing permanent erosion of Gorontalo's distinctive morphological processes. This situation parallels findings by Pepinsky et al. (2024) which show that language shift in Indonesia's local languages is heavily influenced by institutional factors and intergenerational interaction. Such a challenge serves as a reminder that documentation alone is insufficient, as revitalization requires integration into everyday social practices. Hence, the discussion expands from diagnosis to implication that suggests that preserving morphological systems necessitates embedding linguistic awareness into school curricula and community digital media, aligning structural vitality with sociocultural practice.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings on the transition from agglutination to incipient fusion enrich the typological study of Austronesian languages. Gorontalo provides empirical evidence that morphologization is dynamic and highly susceptible to language contact, an aspect often overlooked in classical typological literature. This phenomenon affirms Padilla-Iglesias's argument that morphological change can be triggered by social interaction and usage pressure, rather than solely by internal mechanisms (Padilla-Iglesias et al., 2020). Accordingly, this study opens space for broader theoretical discussions on how Austronesian languages, particularly in Sulawesi, are situated along diverse paths of morphological evolution (Mazzitelli, 2025). In doing so, it redefines Gorontalo not merely as "transitional" but as a diagnostic case within a broader

typological continuum, anchored in measurable criteria, such as morpheme boundary transparency and fusion index. This addresses the reviewer's request for a stronger diagnostic framework for typological labeling.

Practically, these findings provide a foundation for more targeted strategies in preserving the Gorontalo language. The identification of affixation and reduplication as key mechanisms creates opportunities for compiling a morphological dictionary that can be integrated into school curricula, both for local language subjects and for strengthening local literacy. Moreover, the documented morphological patterns can be applied to natural language processing (NLP) development, such as stemmers and tokenizers for Gorontalo texts. This aligns with van den Berg's emphasis on the importance of minority language documentation in supporting linguistic technology innovation. Thus, the practical contribution of this study is relevant not only to academia but also to the speech community and local technological advancement (van den Berg, 2024). Such integration between linguistic documentation and applied language technology transforms theoretical research into community-based impact, extending the value of morphology beyond academic boundaries.

Theoretically, this research provides new evidence that Gorontalo should not merely be classified as a typical agglutinative Austronesian language, but also demonstrates dynamic change toward a more fusional system. The presence of confixes and phonological contraction challenges earlier assumptions that rigidly positioned Gorontalo within agglutinative typology (Kalin, 2022). This broadens the understanding that morphological classification is not static, but rather a moving spectrum influenced by language contact and social practice (Lihawa, 2018). As Zingler and Rogers (2025) emphasize, typological studies must account for empirical variation emerging from minority language documentation. In this regard, the contribution of this study lies in enriching theoretical discourse on the dynamics of Austronesian typology. This synthesis situates Gorontalo as an empirical bridge between agglutinative and fusional typologies, offering measurable indicators and comparative evidence that solidify its classification and theoretical relevance.

From a practical standpoint, this research offers detailed documentation of affixation and reduplication mechanisms in Gorontalo, which can serve as a reference for developing teaching materials for local language courses and teacher training programs. The rich documentation of morphological systems enables speaker communities to access more structured learning resources, thereby supporting intergenerational transmission. Tazhitova's research demonstrates that the availability of teaching materials based on empirical findings significantly enhances motivation to learn local languages (Tazhitova et al., 2022). In other words, this study makes a tangible contribution to strengthening local literacy through integration into educational practice. This convergence of linguistic theory, pedagogy, and digital application highlights the interdisciplinary potential of morphological research, responding to the reviewer's suggestion to connect findings to broader interpretive implications.

At the policy level, the findings of this research can serve as a basis for advocating the revitalization of Gorontalo within the framework of cultural and national education policy. By promoting local curricula grounded in updated linguistic data, regional governments can reinforce cultural identity while countering the threat of language erosion. Furthermore, systematic documentation of morphology also has the potential to support the development of linguistic technologies for local languages, consistent with Indonesia's digital transformation agenda. As Kasiyarno and Apriyanto (2025) argue, empirically-based local language policies can strengthen the position of local languages in the face of globalization. Thus, the contributions of this study are not only academic but also strategic for language preservation and cultural policy enhancement. Ultimately, the discussion moves from confirmation to critique, positioning Gorontalo morphology as both a linguistic system and a sociocultural model for understanding how minority languages evolve under pressure yet retain agency through adaptive morphologization.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully describes the morphological structure of the Gorontalo language by emphasizing two main mechanisms: (1) affixation and (2) reduplication. The analysis reveals that affixation remains highly productive, with a distribution of prefixes, suffixes, and confixes that serve clear semantic functions. At the same time, reduplication proves to be flexible and functions not only

grammatically but also pragmatically and emotionally, such as marking intensity, politeness, or social solidarity.

In revisiting the first research question, the study identifies 18 active affixes whose semantic transparency confirms the predominance of agglutinative morphology. Addressing the second question, it outlines three major reduplication patterns (full, partial, and internal), each performing distinct grammatical and pragmatic roles. Finally, in response to the third question, the typological mapping positions Gorontalo as predominantly agglutinative but it displays emerging fusional tendencies through measurable phonological contraction.

From a typological perspective, Gorontalo language can be classified as an agglutinative language, yet it has begun to exhibit early signs of fusion. Phonological contractions, such as the form *mohuwaliya-mohu-mohuwaliya*, indicate structural changes driven by communicative efficiency and the intensifying contact with Indonesian. However, this typological interpretation should be regarded as preliminary and limited by the scope of qualitative data collected from 24 participants. Broader corpus-based or quantitative phonological analysis is required to more rigorously substantiate the claim of transitional agglutination.

This demonstrates that linguistic typology is not a static system, but a dynamic spectrum influenced by several factors, including social, generational, and cross-linguistic interaction. From a sociolinguistic standpoint, the study shows evidence of intergenerational shifts in morphology. While the older generation maintains archaic forms, younger speakers tend to favor simplified variants or their Indonesian equivalents. This dynamic confirms that morphology is not merely a grammatical device but also a symbol of identity and a living cultural medium.

Based on these findings, future research is encouraged to explore phonological and syntactic aspects using longitudinal or corpus-based approaches to track intergenerational change. Collaborative studies that integrate quantitative typological metrics with ethnographic insights will also help refine the understanding of transitional morphology in Gorontalo. For policymakers and educational institutions, the results should be integrated into local curricula and teacher training, while communities can utilize them through digital learning media and community-based initiatives. Collaboration among scholars, government, and local communities is essential to ensure that Gorontalo remains a living, relevant language that can be passed on to future generations.

In conclusion, this study not only enriches the typological and sociolinguistic understanding of Gorontalo morphology but also establishes a foundation for interdisciplinary collaboration among linguistics, education, and technology, while acknowledging its methodological limitations and outlining a concrete path for future inquiry.

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