

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Contrastive Analysis of Affixation of English and Tiv Languages**

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#### **Abstract**

This study is a qualitative research that employed a contrastive analysis to assess the affixation processes in English and Tiv languages. The study makes use of both the primary and secondary sources of data, as well as the researcher's intuitive knowledge as one of the competent speakers of English and Tiv languages. The study applies thematic content analysis to categorize and interpret the data on English and Tiv affixation processes, using contrastive linguistic theory which was first developed in 1945 by Charles Fries as an

integral component of the methodology of First Language teaching. It is observed that one of the various methods of word formation in English and Tiv languages is affixation, the attachment of a morpheme before or after the stem or a root word to inflect or derive/create new words or show their variant form. Equally, the grammatical and productive imports of the new words created are noticed in the areas of plurality, tense or new words formation. The study observes some similarities and differences in the prefixes and suffixes of the two languages. It also proves evidence of infixation in Tiv language, which is lacking in English. The study, therefore, concludes that English and Tiv languages make use of affixations, taking into cognizance the peculiarity of the two languages. It also concludes that while there is infixation in Tiv, it does not exist in English.

**Keywords:** Contrastive analysis, morphological processes, affixation, prefixation, suffixation, infixation.

## **Introduction**

Language is a means of human communication. Aronoff and Rees-Miller (2003) describe it as an important regulator of individual consciousness and social interaction. It is a system of signs that conforms to the rule that constitute a grammar or a set of culturally transmitted behavioural patterns. According to Sapir (1921), language can be conceptualized as a non-instinctive means of communication; it is conventional as well as subject to changes. This implies that it can be acquired or learnt through a process and, like human beings, can grow and die as well as attain a different form with time, especially when its

rules and conventions are not strictly followed by its speakers. The study of language comprises different levels of analysis such as phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics.

All languages possess these micro-linguistics levels, each of which plays important roles in language. This is because, for one to have a command of a particular language, one must first have the knowledge of its sounds (phonology), know how to combine these sounds conventionally to form words (morphology), as well as know the rules of words combination to form sentences (syntax), which must be meaningful. When this combination follows the conventions of a language, meaningful sentences are realized. Bamgbose (2002) maintains that correct sentence structure makes it possible to communicate without confusion. This paper is concerned with the processes of combination of morphemes to form words in English and Tiv languages.

There are different processes of word formation such as clipping, blending, affixation and so on. The focus of this paper is on affixation.

Affixation is, therefore, one of the morphological processes used in many languages including English and Tiv to form new words - by adding prefixes or suffixes to the roots or bases. According to Bybee (1958), this process allows languages to expand their vocabulary and create new words that convey specific meanings. He equally maintains that it is a crucial aspect of language structure; understanding its mechanisms provides insights into and semantics. In English, affixation is a process of word formation through addition of prefixes and suffixes. It should be noted that while the prefix is the morpheme added before the root or stem word to derive a new word or add to its original meaning, suffixes are appended at the end of the root or stem words to derive

new words or inflect their meaning. These are productive processes because they are used to form new words, whether derivational or inflectional. Affixes can be used to change the part of speech of a word, to indicate grammatical function or convey meaning. For example, the prefix "un-" can be used to form antonyms such as "unhappy" or "unwell." Suffixes like "-able" can form adjectives such as "lovable" or "manageable." Understanding English affixation can help language learners and linguists to appreciate the complexity and creativity of language (Aronoff & Rees-Miller, 2003).

Tiv is a Niger-Congo language spoken in Nigeria whose affixation system has been studied by linguists. Tiv affixation is used to form new words, indicate grammatical function and convey meaning similar to English. Tiv language has its unique set of affixes that are used to convey specific meanings and grammatical functions. For instance, Tiv prefixes and suffixes can be used to indicate tense, aspect and mood in verbs (Abraham, 1940).

A comparative analysis of affixation in English and Tiv languages can provide an insight into the similarities and differences between these languages and shed light on their morphological structures. By comparing the affixation systems of both languages, researchers can identify patterns and differences that can inform language teaching, language documentation and linguistic research.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The aim of this paper is to contrast the affixation process of English and Tiv languages. Therefore, the specific objectives set to achieve this aim are to:

- i. identify the similarities between English and Tiv affixation processes,
- ii. identify the differences between English and Tiv affixation processes.

## **Research Questions**

The specific questions this study is set to answer are:

- i. What are the similarities between the English and Tiv affixation processes?
- ii. What are the differences between the English and Tiv affixation processes?

## **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework adopted for analysis in this study is Contrastive Linguistic Theory which was first developed by Charles Flies in 1945 as an integral component of methodology of first language teaching. This theory was founded on the assumption that second language learners tend to transfer formal features of their first language into the second language utterances. The idea of 'transfer' means carrying over the habits of the mother tongue into the second language. It can equally be seen as the overbearing influence of the learner's first language on the acquisition of the second language (Al-khresheh, 2016). This transfer is considered as an essential component of language learning at all levels, as it is considered as a language learning strategy used by language learners to facilitate language learning.

According to Theo Van et al. (2024), contrastive linguistics is used as a synonym for contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis is a “systematic comparison of specific linguistic characteristics of two or more languages.” Contrastive linguistics is the analysis of the similarities and differences between two or more languages. The basic difficulties of learning a new language are caused by the interference of the first language (L1) at all linguistic levels.

Existing literature shows that contrastive linguistics or contrastive analysis evolved from philology, specifically comparative philology (Theo Van et al, 2024). Comparative philology is the branch of philology that deals with the relations between languages that descended from a common origin. However, the aims of comparative philology differ from that of contrastive linguistics.

An objective of contrastive analysis aims at “establishing linguistic universals and language-specific characteristics of language” (Theo Van et al. 2024) which is an approach of historical linguistic tradition. The tradition, according to them, began with William Jones’ comparison of Greek and Latin with Sanskrit, in which he discovered systematic similarities between the languages. As research in this area evolved, and particularly in the nineteenth century, more comparative linguistic studies appeared. They were, however, more concerned with how the phonological units are related and how they evolved.

The second objective of contrastive analysis is that differences in language are attributed to learning problems. This research takes into cognizance the two objectives of contrastive analysis mentioned above. In other words, the research is concerned with discovering similarities and differences between English and Tiv affixation.

### **Research Methodology**

This study is a qualitative research that makes use of both the primary and secondary data. As such, it utilizes textbooks, journal articles etc. which are secondary data. The primary data are generated from the field of study since one of the researchers is a competent speaker of Tiv language besides English. The study, therefore, applies thematic content analysis to categorize and

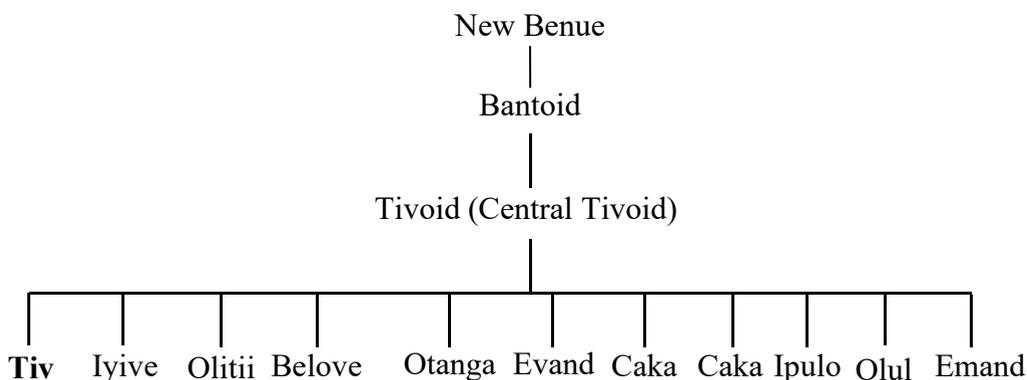
interpret the data on English and Tiv affixation processes. The qualitative data analysis process contributes to uncovering the nature of affixation processes, especially their similarities and differences in English and Tiv.

### **Basic Information on Tiv Language**

Some linguists say that the name Tiv has two meanings. Makar (1994:3) posits that the Tiv has dual meaning: a group of people, who by 1963 census numbered one and half million, and the name of the father of all Tiv people. According to the National Population Commission of Nigeria, the population of Tiv people is approximated in 2016 to be about four million (3,976,700) (National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Wegh (1998:33) argues that the name Tiv is used to connote three things – the name of Tiv ethnic group, the name of their language and the name of their ancestral father. This study upholds the second meaning which conceives Tiv as a language spoken by Tiv people.

Tiv language belongs to the Bantu language groups (Melherbe, 1931; Abraham, 1934, 1940; Isichei, 1976; Oshomba, 1990; Ishima, 2018). Thomas (1925) and Talbot (1926) view Tiv as Semi-Bantu, Greenberg (1977: 59) places “Tiv as main Bantu (south Bantu), and all Bantu languages are under the Benue-Congo prototype of Niger-Congo phylum”. In support of the above, Abraham (1934:5-7) affirms that the language is similar to that of Bantu Nyenza language, identifying some linguistic similarities between the two languages such as: *yoka* (Bantu), *iyó* (Tiv) (snake); *tu* (Bantu), *tough* (Tiv) (ear); *nume* (Bantu), *nom* (Tiv) (husband); *bala* (Bantu), *bar* (Tiv) (salt); *kuha* (Bantu), *kuhe* (Tiv) (bone), *mwana* (Bantu), *wan* (Tiv) (child); *iyongo* (Bantu), *iyange* (Tiv) (day/sun); etc. (Hanmaikyur, 2005:27).

Just like any other languages in the Benue-Congo, Tiv also has noun class system. Greenberg (1977) further sites Tivoid and several other languages under the East Bantu as languages ancestral to Bantu which share class system and tonal features. In line with this, Ishima (2018:12) posits that the largest single group within Tivoid is here named Central Tivoid. It consists of:



**Table 1: Classification of Tiv within the Central Tivoid**

Blench (2011:17) explains that the above division is based on linguistic evidence of the coherence of these languages (that is, the strength of shared lexical items). Williamson (1971) and Greenberg (1977) further explain that Tivoid is assigned to the Bantoid group based on such morphological aspect like double affixation and lexical similarities with other branches of Bantoid.

In the opinion of Sokpo (2016: 35), Tiv is an agglutinative language. She upholds that “agglutinative language is a process of word formation in which words are derived by combining parts, each with a separate meaning, that is, each morpheme corresponds to a single meaning and the morphemes are simply connected lineally”. This is to say that Tiv words occur in a linear sequence of morphs – *or* (person) + *ya* (home) gives you *orya* (owner of a home). Ishima

(2018: 25) maintains that “Tiv operates a morpheme based morphological structure” and that “word formation strategies in Tiv involve morphological process of derivational inflection order. His description of Tiv morphology is fusional, as he insists that the morphology of the language reflects terms undergoing derivational or inflectional operations. For example, if suffix –n is added to a root word (verb), it indicates progression, thus; *fa* meaning “know” + n gives you *fa-n* meaning “knowing”.

### **The English Language in Nigeria**

According to Tanno (1998), most of the languages of Europe and Asia belong to “the Indo-European family. Within this wider family, there are sub-groups such as Germanic languages such as German, English, Dutch and Swedish.

The use of English in Nigeria has a long history, dating as far back as the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century when the British merchants and Christian missionaries settled in the coastal towns of Badagry (near Lagos in the present day South-west Nigeria) and Calabar (a town in the present day South-south Nigeria).

According to Akindele and Adegbite (2007:34) The genesis of the use of English dated back to the early nineteenth century when freed slaves of Nigerian origin returned to Nigeria sequel to abolition of the slave trade. Many of the freed slaves had received formal education from abroad. Those among them who had Christian orientation proved useful as translators and interpreters in Christian evangelization during the early period of missionary activities (Akindele & Adegbite 2007:57)

It is important to note that the primary aim of the Christian missionaries was not to make their converts speak English; rather it was to make them literate

enough to read the Bible in their indigenous languages. “Some indigenes”, as Akindele and Adegbite confirm, “were able to learn and use the language after which they became catechists and teachers in the mission schools” (57).

The British colonialists came and propelled the use of the English language as the language of education, administration, trade and commerce, medium of social and inter-ethnic communication etc. Hence, it is no longer surprising that English has become a “Nigerian language”. The language has become an invaluable legacy of the British colonialist. It is apt to say that English is a language of prestige spoken by many Nigerians.

### **Grammar**

Grammar is a set of rules governing the composition of sentences, clauses, phrases and words. In traditional grammar, words are the basic units of analysis. Grammarians classify words according to their parts of speech, identify and list the forms by which words can be identified. Words are the main entries in dictionaries. Sapir (1921:34) defines a word as “one of the smallest, completely satisfying bits of isolated “meaning” into which sentence resolves itself”. To Žirmunskij (1966: 66), “the word is the most concise unit of language which is independent in meaning and form”. Words comprise basic units called morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest part of a word that has grammatical function or meaning (Žirmunskij, 1966: 66). Consider the following: picked, passed, {pick} + {ed}, {pass}+ {ed}. The last segment {ed} cannot be further broken into a smaller meaning unit.

### **Morphological Processes**

Every language has its peculiar ways of forming words to generate meaningful grammatical expressions. This situation is known as morphological

processes. According to Eastwood (1994: 48), morphological process “... is a means of changing a *stem* to adjust its meaning to fit its syntactic and communicational context”. This aligns with Matthews’ (2007) position that: Morphological process [is] any of the formal processes or operations by which the forms of words are derived from ‘stems’ or ‘roots’. For example, the word “re-ran” is derived from the root, ‘run’, by two morphological processes, one adding “-re” (- rerun), the other by adding “-ed” to “re-run” to realise its simple past form “re-ran”. Matthews further lists types of morphological processes to be “... affix; compound; modification; reduplication; subtraction, suppletion” (252). Morphological processes affect roots and stem and usually lead to the production of new words in a language (Zapata, 2007). They define the shape of words which are classified into two types: derivational and inflectional. Derivational deals with word formation (which creates new words from existing ones, thereby changing the form or category of the original word) while inflectional does not change the basic or original meaning of the base word.

Put simply, morphological process is any of the formal processes or operations by which the forms of words are derived. For example, the word “replace” is derived from the root “place”, then morpheme “re”- a prefix – is added to the root. Linguistic studies have recognized certain procedures from which pluralisation is achieved in languages. Applicable to Tiv grammar are affixation, tonation, morpheme - transformation or replacives, morpheme deletion, vowel mutation, morpheme substitution and others. Unlike English, Tiv nouns take the prefix morphemes “i”, “a”, “u”, “m”, “mba” copular as well as “ev”, “ov” and “v” suffixes to form plurals. Note these examples: *wondo* (trouser) and *u-wondo* (trousers); as well as *akpa* (cane) and *mba-akpa* (canes)

etc. The choice of affixation for a contrastive study is derived from Greenbaum's (1997: 430) view who asserts that affixation is "...the chief processes of English [Tiv] word-formation by which the base may be modified". Affixation, therefore, involves adding a prefix to the base, with or without a change of word class (e.g. author – co-author); and adding a suffix to the base, with or without a change of word-class (e.g. drive – driver).

### **Affixation in Tiv Language**

An affix is an additive morpheme attached to an already existing root or stem to realize another form of the same word or another word entirely (Bybee, 1958). Tiv language has its affixes divided into three based on their position: (1) prefix which are simply affixes added to the initial or beginning of the root word; (2) infix added in the middle of a word or two words and (3) suffix which comes after the root word. To realise the above, Tiv language makes use of the following morphemes: "i-", "a-", "u-", "m-" and "mba-".

### **Examples of Prefixation in Tiv**

#### **"i-" Prefix**

	<b>Root word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Pf. Marker</b>	<b>New word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
1.	<i>takeda</i>	book	i-	<i>i-tyakeda</i>	books
2.	<i>vyo</i>	goat	i-	<i>i-vyo</i>	goats
3.	<i>hyo</i>	antelope	i-	<i>i-hyo</i>	antelopes
4.	<i>kpenga</i>	business	i-	<i>i-kpenga</i>	businesses
5.	<i>uho</i>	tunnel	i-	<i>i-hyo</i>	tunnel

#### **"a-" Prefix**

	<b>Root word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Pf. Marker</b>	<b>New word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
6.	<i>ikyondo</i>	cloth	a-	<i>a-kondo</i>	cloths

7.	<i>ihyungwa</i>	pit	a-	<i>a-hungwa</i>	pits
8.	<i>kyikye</i>	bicycle	a-	<i>a-kyikye</i>	bicycles
9.	<i>ikpye</i>	bottle	a-	<i>a-kpe</i>	bottles
10.	<i>gbande</i>	plate	a-	<i>a-gbande</i>	plates

### “u-” Prefix

	<b>Root word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>Pf.Marker</b>	<b>Newword</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
11.	<i>bol</i>	ball	u-	<i>u-bol</i>	balls
12.	<i>oo-oo</i>	anthill	u-	<i>u-oo-oo</i>	anthills
13.	<i>uma</i>	life	u-	<i>u-uma</i>	lives
14.	<i>windoo</i>	window	u-	<i>u-windoo</i>	windows
15.	<i>zaar</i>	platform	u-	<i>u-zaar</i>	platforms
16.	<i>liga</i>	shirt	u-	<i>u-liga</i>	shirts

**Source:** Fieldwork (2025)

Examples 1-16 demonstrate that ‘i-’ ‘a-’ and ‘u-’ morphemes are added to a noun stem in Tiv to realize a new form of the word, from singular to the plural form.

In contrast, in English, the same words have plural morpheme “s” added at the end of such words. For instance, in numbers 1-5, the words ‘book’, ‘goat’, ‘antelope’, ‘business’, and ‘tunnel’ are made plural with the suffix ‘s’ added to realise ‘books’, ‘goats’, ‘antelopes’, ‘businesses’ and ‘tunnels’ respectively. The same process is applicable to numbers 6-16 in the realisation of the plural forms of those words. In Tiv, the prefix makers indicated above are mostly used to realise the plural forms of some nouns, whereas in English, plural forms of nouns are formed predominantly with the use of suffixes.

## **Prefixation in English Language**

Just as obtainable in Tiv language above, English also receives prefixation. As seen above in the case of Tiv whose prefixes indicate pluralisation, prefixation in English is normally used in the formation of different words with different grammatical imports as demonstrated in the examples that follows: ante-date (antedate), circum-scribe (circumscribe), co-author (coauthor), deactivate (deactivate), dis-appear (disappear), ex-president, homo-phone (homophone), hyper-active (hyperactive), il-legal (illegal) etc.

It is observed that all the prefixes attached to the base words make those words new words with different meanings from the base words. For instance, “date” (a point in time) transforms to mean earlier than the actual time when prefixed with ‘ante’ to realise ‘antedate’, etc.

## **Differences and Similarities of Prefixation in Tiv and English**

Just like the English language in which the root words stand on their own for meaning, the root words in Tiv can also stand on their own to make meaning. A good example is ‘*liga*’ (shirt). However, some morphemes with which root or stem words are prefixed in English, like “micro, macro, hyper, homo, an”, etc., make meaning on their own while the morphemes with which stem or root words are prefixed in Tiv do not concisely make meaning on their own without been attached to the root word. To this end, ‘u’ has no meaning apart from being a letter of the alphabet in Tiv unless when attached to root word, ‘*u-liga*’ (shirts) to indicate number. This entails that some free morphemes which constitutethe English prefixes, as indicated above, can be used as words in English whereas only morphemes form prefix in the Tiv language.

Also, while prefixes in English are most often than not derivational, which entails are mostly used to create new words which could either belong to entirely different word category as in il-legal (adjective from noun ‘legal’) or perform grammatical function such as de-humanise, ir-responsible, il-literate, etc., the inflection of prefix makers to root words in Tiv results to pluralization of nominal lexical category. It can be observed that in both languages, a prefix can be inflected to a variety of root words. For instance, the prefix ‘i’ in Tiv can be inflected to ‘vyo’(goat) as in ‘*ivyō*’ (goats), the same prefix can be inflected to another word, ‘*kyuleke*’ (maize) as in ‘*i-kyuleke*’ (maize).

From the similarity point of view, this study observes that both English and Tiv prefixes are used to derive or form variant forms of words. They either perform productive function of forming new words or grammatical functions of forming opposites or plurals.

### **Infixation in English and Tiv**

Infixation is the introduction of a morpheme in between a root word to create a new word or a shift in lexical class. Sometimes the new word created may carry a new meaning or simply create a shift in number, tense and so on.

#### **Examples of Infix in Tiv**

<b>Root word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>	<b>New word</b>	<b>Gloss</b>
<i>Tar</i>	nation	<i>i-tyar</i>	nations
<i>Ikwa</i>	leaf	<i>i-kya</i>	leaves
<i>Bua</i>	cow	<i>i-byua</i>	cows
<i>Takeda</i>	book	<i>i-tyakeda</i>	books
<i>Tom</i>	job	<i>i.tyom</i>	jobs

**Source:** Generated by the Researcher

While there are no noticeable cases of infixation in the English language, there is a unique style of infixation in Tiv language. As observed above, Tiv language creates infixation by first introducing a prefix to the root or stem word. In the word *i-tyar* for instance, the prefix ‘i’ is first introduced to the root word *tar*, then the infix ‘y’ is brought in to create a change. In such cases, the resultant word is mostly in the plural form as observed above.

### Suffixation in English and Tiv

Suffixation is the insertion of a morpheme at the end or final position of a word. These suffixes are used to perform divergent functions such as new words formation as well as to perform grammatical functions. Examples of suffixation in English are as follows:

Root word	Suffix	New word
drain	age	drainage
extreme	ity	extremity
secure	ty	security
meaning	less	meaningless
slow	ly	slowly
go	ing	going
eat	s	eats

**Source:** Generated by the Researcher

### Examples of Suffix in Tiv

Suffix	Root word	Gloss	New word	Gloss
ev	<i>angbian</i>	relation	<i>angbianev</i>	relations

n	<i>naha</i>	drive	<i>nahan</i>	drives
egh	<i>her</i>	there	<i>heregh</i>	there
aa	<i>hungwaja</i>	cricket	<i>a-hungwajaa</i>	crickets
an	<i>hembra</i>	more than	<i>himban</i>	the most (plus the size)
en	<i>yem</i>	go	<i>yemen</i>	going

**Source:** Generated by the Researcher

Divergently, while there is clipping of some alphabets or morphemes in English before inserting the suffix as in ‘extreme’ -- extrem (ity), it is not so in Tiv where suffixes are appended to root word without any form of deletion or omission. It is noticed that in Tiv, suffixes are a combination of alphabets or morphemes that cannot stand alone for meaning except they are attached to root words. However, in English, some bound morphemes can equally serve as words which can stand on their own for meaning. Such bound morphemes as “less, age, line” etc can make meaning on their own, therefore, they can be construed as individual words.

From the convergent perspective, there is evidence of tense formation in both English and Tiv. In English, the “-ing” and “s” morphemes are mostly attached to the base form of most verbs, as in “go-ing”, and “eat-s” etc. to indicate progressive and simple present forms respectively, whereas in Tiv, the “-en” morpheme is attached to the base form of verbs, as in “*yem-en*” (going) etc. to indicate the progressive and simple present forms of such Tiv verbs respectively. This shows that both English and Tiv make use of morphemes to inflect the verb to form tenses. Equally, both languages employ their morphemes at the end of stem or root words to form new words that belong to different word categories as well as plural formation.

## **Conclusion**

This study has carried out a contrastive analysis of affixation in English and Tiv with a view of assessing their areas of divergence and convergence. By so doing, it has employed thematic analysis of the affixation processes which include prefix, infix and suffix with a particular emphasis on the differences and similarities that exist between English and Tiv languages. It has been observed that affixation processes, especially via prefix and suffix are very much in existence in the two languages. While the prefixes in English perform both the productive (word formation) and grammatical functions, those in Tiv, more often than not, perform mostly grammatical function (plural formation). The same thing replicates in the use of suffixes, except that Tiv, in this case, performs both productive (word formation) and grammatical functions (tense and plural formations). However, it is observed in this study that infixes are not feasibly obtainable in English as they are found and used in Tiv.

In summary, with analysis carried out using the above data, this study has observed that one of the various methods of word formation in English and Tiv languages is affixation which is simply the inflection or insertion of a morpheme to the stem or a root word to create new words or show its variant form. The new words created may show plurality, tense or form a new word. These similarities and differences are observed in prefixation and suffixation of the two languages. It should be noted that while there are copious evidences of infixation in Tiv, English lacks such. The study, therefore, concludes that English and Tiv languages make use of affixations, taking into cognizance the peculiarity of the two languages. It also concludes that while there is infixation in Tiv, it does not formally exist in English.

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