

**“Does he have sharp eyes or sharp lungs?”  
Expressions of emotion and character  
in Makasae**

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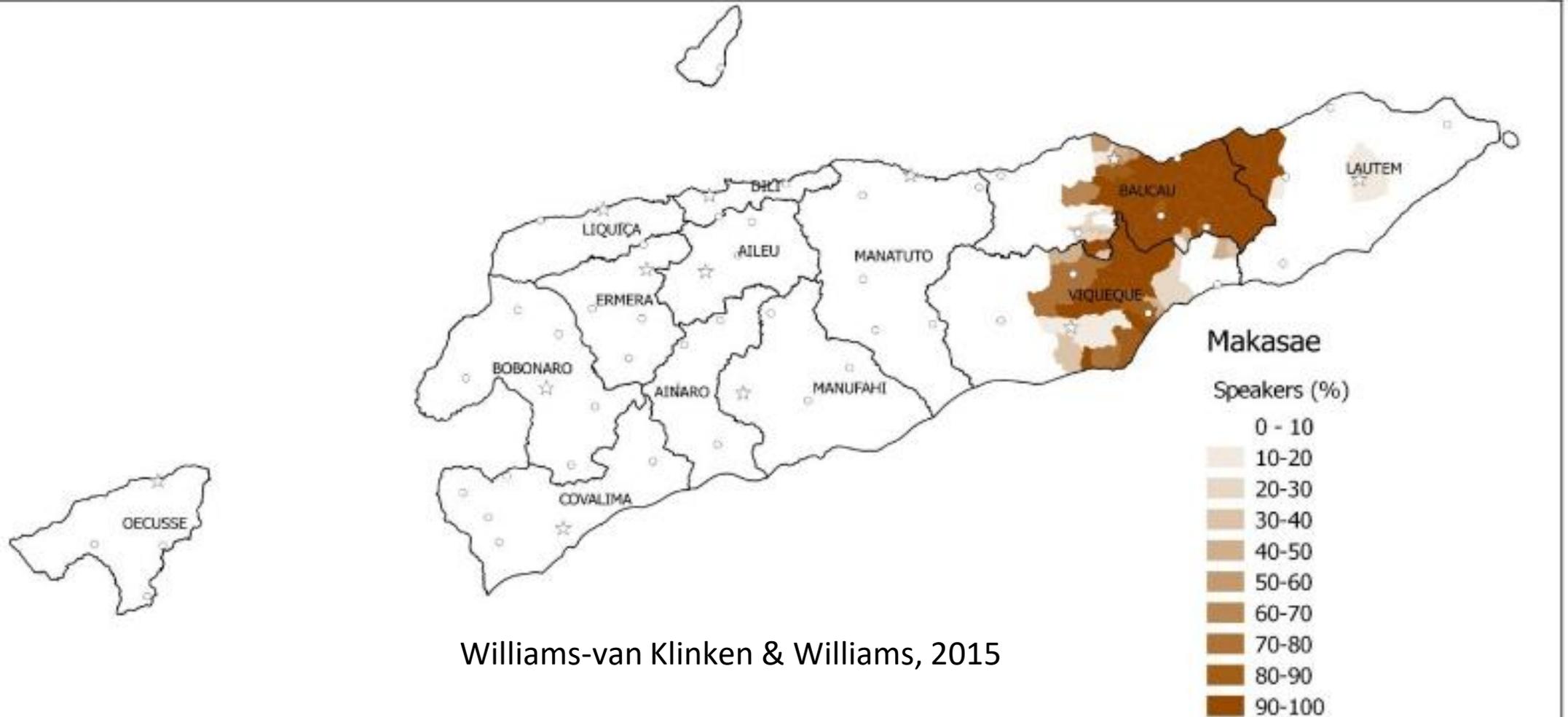
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# Makasae

- Papuan
- 124,000 speakers, 10% of East Timor's population (2015 census)
- SOV

## Location of Makasae speakers



Williams-van Klinken & Williams, 2015

# Emotion and character

Mostly collocations of a **body part noun** and an **adjective, verb, noun or number**

| Makasae            | Literal         | Meaning                                      |
|--------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>sada mera</i>   | lungs sharp     | furious                                      |
| <i>da'e ria</i>    | head run        | 1. unfaithful to spouse; 2. creative thinker |
| <i>da'e afakai</i> | head flintstone | stubborn, refuse to listen                   |
| <i>ari u</i>       | liver one       | unity  |

# Structure: 2 constructions

1. Subject = person + body part, predicate = characteristic

*Tino gi da'e | geele, estuda to tama.*  
Tino POS head | hard study not enter

'Tino is a slow learner, even when he studies he doesn't learn.'

2. Subject = person, predicate = body part + characteristic.

*Tino ere | da'e geele.*  
Tino this | head hard

'Tino is a slow learner.'

# Negation

Negative can precede just the second part of the expression, or the whole expression.

*Bete gi da'e to geele.*

Bete POS head not hard

'Bete is not a slow learner.'

*Bete ere to da'e geele.*

Bete this head not hard

'Bete is not a slow learner.'

# Intensification and comparatives

*lita* ‘very/more’ precedes just the second part of the expression when it means ‘very’. In comparatives it precedes the whole expression.

*Bete gi da’e lita geele.*

Bete POS head very hard

‘Bete is a very slow learner.’

*Bete gi lita da’e geele.*

Bete 3s very head hard

‘Bete is a slower learner than her.’

# *da'e* “head”: intelligent, faithful

| Makasae               | Literal         | Meaning                                      |
|-----------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>da'e losa</i>      | head empty      | 1. bald; 2. stupid                           |
| <i>da'e geele</i>     | head hard       | slow learner                                 |
| <i>da'e momala</i>    | head soft       | fast learner                                 |
| <i>da'e wee</i>       | head have       | smart  |
| <i>da'e koulu</i>     | head hot        | 1. fever; 2. speak nonsense                  |
| <i>da'e afakai</i>    | head flintstone | stubborn, refuse to listen                   |
| <i>da'e ga</i>        | head tight      | naughty                                      |
| <i>da'e gira gira</i> | head crazy      | having many love affairs                     |
| <i>da'e ria</i>       | head run        | 1. unfaithful to spouse; 2. creative thinker |

# *mutu* “inside”: feel, know, character

| <b>Makasae</b>        | <b>Literal</b>   | <b>Meaning</b>                |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| <i>mutu sisiiri</i>   | inside pain      | 1. angry; 2. jealous, envious |
| <i>mutu sege</i>      | inside difficult | angry                         |
| <i>mutu taba</i>      | inside hole      | able to manage things         |
| <i>mutu meta</i>      | inside black     | know nothing                  |
| <i>mutu molu</i>      | inside lose      | innocent                      |
| <i>mutu loloro</i>    | inside straight  | aware                         |
| <i>mutu nogo nogo</i> | inside fool      | foolish                       |
| <i>mutu rau</i>       | inside good      | kind                          |
| <i>mutu saree</i>     | inside clean     | honest                        |
| <i>mutu u</i>         | inside one       | united                        |

## *fanu* “face”: angry, crazy, absent, dead

| Makasae               | Literal     | Meaning  |
|-----------------------|-------------|--|
| <i>fanu koulu</i>     | face hot    | angry  |
| <i>fanu teulu</i>     | face smog   | scowl  |
| <i>fanu gira-gira</i> | face crazy  | Crazy  |
| <i>fanu kuili</i>     | face curve  | crazy  |
| <i>fanu saree</i>     | face clean  | sober (not drunk), normal (not crazy)          |
| <i>fanu molu</i>      | face lose   | absent from ceremony, dead                     |
| <i>fanu meta</i>      | face black  | dizzy, unconscious                             |
| <i>fanu kamera</i>    | face camera | loves to be in photos (slang, calque on Tetun) |

# *tana* “hand”: contribute, diligent; throw straight

| <b>Makasae</b>      | <b>Literal</b> | <b>Meaning</b>   |
|---------------------|----------------|--|
| <i>tana asana</i>   | hand long      | 1.habitual thief; 2. able to contribute much in a traditional ceremony |
| <i>tana digaara</i> | hand short     | unable to contribute much in traditional ceremony                      |
| <i>tana molu</i>    | hand lose      | don't contribute anything in traditional ceremony                      |
| <i>tana lafu</i>    | hand life      | diligent, fast worker  |
| <i>tana lawa</i>    | hand money     | do nothing when others are working                                     |
| <i>tana uruwatu</i> | hand God       | do nothing when others are working                                     |
| <i>tana biiki</i>   | hand bitter    | plants die when this person picks its leaves                           |
| <i>tana lolooro</i> | hand straight  | always throw straight to the target                                    |

# *nana* “eye”: able to see, awake; untrustworthy

| <b>Makasae</b>      | <b>Literal</b> | <b>Meaning</b>                                     |
|---------------------|----------------|--|
| <i>nana deta</i>    | eye ripe       | blind (can't see anything), don't notice something |
| <i>nana ifi</i>     | eye worm       | can't see something that you should be able to see |
| <i>nana taba</i>    | eye hole       | have the ability to see supernatural beings        |
| <i>nana afa</i>     | eye stone      | able to stay up for two days and nights or more    |
| <i>nana fani</i>    | eye sweet      | feel wide awake after a sleep                      |
| <i>nana sare'e</i>  | eye clean      | feel wide awake after a sleep                      |
| <i>nana ifibere</i> | eye star       | not sleepy   |
| <i>nana mera</i>    | eye sharp      | love touching people's stuff without asking        |
| <i>nana ria ria</i> | eye run        | have a girl in every town                          |

# *wali* “ear”: able to hear; naughty

| Makasae             | Literal      | Meaning                                       |
|---------------------|--------------|---|
| <i>wali deta</i>    | ear ripe     | deaf, can't hear at the time of speaking      |
| <i>wali lolooro</i> | ear straight | able to hear something that others can't hear |
| <i>wali ifi</i>     | ear worm     | naughty                                       |
| <i>wali noo</i>     | ear pocket   | naughty                                       |

# *muni* “nose”: smell; able to find things

| <i>muni gi</i>    | nose grimace     | cry   |
|-------------------|------------------|---|
| <i>muni kula</i>  | nose<br>mushroom | animal) can't smell something   |
| <i>muni looro</i> | nose straight    | 1. able to find things that the owner denies having<br>2.able to smell something that others can't smell” |

# *a'a* “mouth”: talkative

| Makasae         | Literal         | Meaning               |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| <i>a'a bere</i> | mouth big       | Talkative, talk a lot |
| <i>a'a sege</i> | mouth difficult | putting down          |

# *gula* “body”: energetic

| <b>Makasae</b>      | <b>Literal</b> | <b>Meaning</b>   |
|---------------------|----------------|--|
| <i>gula ae'e</i>    | body light     | feel fresh, energetic, ready to do things                      |
| <i>gula tiiri</i>   | body heavy     | lazy, feel bored, unmotivated                                  |
| <i>gula dafuuru</i> | body cooked    | feel tired   |
| <i>gula koulu</i>   | body hot       | say, buy, or do something that is not necessary (e.g. overact) |

# *sada* “lungs”, *waboku* ‘heart’: feel

| <b>Makasae</b>        | <b>Literal</b> | <b>Meaning</b>                                     |
|-----------------------|----------------|--|
| <i>sada taur</i>      | lungs break    | skinny   |
| <i>sada mera</i>      | lungs sharp    | furious  |
| <i>sada fatu</i>      | lungs swollen  | broken-hearted (slang)                             |
| <i>waboku sisiiri</i> | heart pain     | 1. physical pain in heart;<br>2. feel heart-broken |

# *ari* “liver”: firm

| <b>Makasae</b>     | <b>Literal</b> | <b>Meaning</b>    |
|--------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <i>ari tidiini</i> | liver firm     | stand firm, brave |
| <i>ari u</i>       | liver one      | united            |

# *atu* “stomach”: greedy, worried

| Makasae            | Literal      | Meaning              |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------|
| <i>atu geele</i>   | stomach hard | greedy               |
| <i>atu sisiiri</i> | stomach sore | worried, preoccupied |

# Other

| Makasae               | Literal            | Meaning   |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---|
| <i>atugu'u ifi</i>    | buttock worm       | 1. rarely at home, always out hanging around with friends;<br>2. restless, always moving about when sitting on a seat |
| <i>atugu'u ti'iri</i> | buttock heavy      | lazy  |
| <i>namu lesa</i>      | body.hair not.have | having nothing (properties)   |
| <i>para baga</i>      | hip wound          | wear sarong, skirt, pants not properly  |

# Conclusion

- Lexicalised, but the two parts of the expression can be separated.
- Productive:
  - 16 body parts
  - Can create new expressions, or create literal translations from Tetun.
- Metaphorical:
  - One expression can have a physical and a metaphorical meaning, or two different metaphorical meanings.