Could you be a little more specific?
The Madurese applicative *-aghi*

As is fairly typical of languages closely related to Indonesian (Balinese, Javanese, Sasak, Sundanese), Madurese includes what have been referred to as applicative morphemes, which in Madurese are *-aghi* and *-è* (analogues of Indonesian *-kan* and *-i*). Frequently, the affix alters the predicate-argument structure of the predicate to which it is affixed, exemplified with *-aghi* in (1b). In this paper, I show that in addition to the change in argument alignment, there are differences in interpretation between basic and applied structures which are related to the specificity of an argument in the clause. I propose that this specificity is not unlike that specificity requirement associated with subjects.

I first demonstrate that this specificity is evident in the assorted structures in which *-aghi* can occur that are associated with various functions (e.g. benefactive, causative, instrumental). For example, in the basic structure (1a), Wati's mother is likely the general topic of discussion or perhaps the speaker may not know precisely what about Wati's mother is being discussed. Conversely, (1b) carries the implication that there is specific information that the speaker knows of. The same notion of specificity is evident in benefactive and other applied structures, as will be shown.

I then demonstrate that this specificity relates to the "applied object", as in (1b), and that specificity is the appropriate notion. This specificity provides an account for the distribution of *wh*-in situ questions, quintessential non-specific nominals. While the prepositional benefactive object can be questioned in situ (2a), the applied benefactive object in (2b) cannot.

Turning to discourse evidence, I show that the distribution of *-aghi* converges with Donohue's (2001) observation that applicatives in Tukang Besi largely occur in environments where the applied object has some level of topic or thematic prominence. Inasmuch as topics are definite, they are specific. Thus the implication of specificity inherent in *-aghi*'s distribution reinforces or perhaps helps account for Donohue's observation.

The paper concludes by looking at the voice system and applicatives. Like other Indonesian-type languages, subjects in Madurese must be specific. We consider the fact that voice and applicative morphology include specificity requirements and how it might bear on Davies' (2005) conjecture that the applicative morphemes might be a vestige of a richer voice system in Madurese.

Data

(1) a. *Wati a-carèta ka Marlèna bâb   èbu'-na*.
         Wati AV-talk   to Marlena about mother-DEF
         'Wati talked to Marlena about her mother.'
     b. *Wati nyarèta'-**aghi** èbu'-na   ka Marlèna*.
         Wati AV.talk-AGHI mother-DEF to Marlena
         'Wati talked about her mother to Marlena.'

(3) a. *Ita ngèbâ   kotha' kaangghuy **sapa**?*
         Ita AV.carry box   for   who
         'Who did Ita carry the box for?'
     b.*Ita ngèbâ'-**âghi** **sapa** kotha'?*

References

Davies, William D. 2005. The richness of Madurese voice, *The many faces of Austronesian voice systems: Some new empirical studies*, ed. by I W. Arka & M. Ross, 193-216. Pacific Linguistics.

Donohue, Mark. 2001. Coding choices in argument structure: Austronesian applicatives in texts. *Studies in Language* 25:217-254.