

A STUDY ON STUDENTS' ABILITY IN DETERMINING DERIVATIONAL MORPHEMES AND INFLECTIONAL MORPHEMES

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate the students' ability in identifying derivational and inflectional morphemes at the University of Riau's English Study Program. The subjects of this study are fifth-semester students enrolled in morphology courses during the academic year 2025/2026. This study employs a quantitative descriptive design, utilizing tests composed of multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank items to assess students' recognition and understanding of morphemes within sentences. The findings show that students' ability in identifying derivational morphemes is approximately 54%, while their proficiency in inflectional morphemes is higher at around 64%. The results indicate that students perform better in recognizing grammatical inflectional markers than lexical derivational forms, highlighting the need for more focused instruction on derivational morphology. The study contributes to language education by emphasizing the importance of morphological awareness in enhancing vocabulary, reading, and writing skills among EFL learners. These findings can inform educators to improve pedagogical strategies in teaching morphology, supporting the development of students' linguistic competence in English. This research provides valuable insights for further studies in morphology and vocabulary development in EFL contexts.

Keywords: Morphology, Derivational Morphemes, Inflectional Morphemes, Student Ability, Language Education

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengenali morfem derivasional dan infleksional di Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Riau. Subjek penelitian adalah mahasiswa semester lima yang mengikuti mata kuliah morfologi selama tahun akademik 2025/2026. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kuantitatif deskriptif dengan instrumen berupa tes pilihan ganda dan isian untuk menilai kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengenali dan memahami morfem dalam kalimat. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam mengenali morfem derivasional sekitar 54%, sementara kemampuan mereka dalam mengenali morfem infleksional lebih tinggi mencapai 64%. Temuan ini menggambarkan bahwa mahasiswa lebih mahir mengenali morfem infleksional dibandingkan dengan morfem derivasional, sehingga menunjukkan perlunya pendekatan pengajaran yang lebih fokus pada morfem derivasional. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pengembangan ilmu pengetahuan di bidang pendidikan bahasa Inggris, khususnya mengenai pentingnya kesadaran morfologis dalam meningkatkan kosa kata, kemampuan membaca, dan menulis siswa EFL. Hasil penelitian ini dapat menjadi acuan bagi

pendidik untuk meningkatkan strategi pengajaran morfologi, mendukung pengembangan kompetensi linguistik mahasiswa. Penelitian ini juga memberikan wawasan yang bermanfaat untuk studi selanjutnya mengenai morfologi dan pengembangan kosa kata dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing.

Kata Kunci: Morfologi, Morfem Derivasional, Morfem Infleksional, Kemampuan Siswa, Pendidikan Bahasa

A. Introduction

Morphology is one of the crucial aspects of language and a branch of macro-linguistics. It plays an important role in language skills such as listening, reading, writing, viewing, and presenting. This research is motivated by the limited knowledge on the level of understanding among students regarding derivational and inflectional morphemes in the English language. Students also face difficulties in understanding morphemes. Interviews conducted with six fifth-semester students from the English Department revealed that their ability to recognize and comprehend these morphemes remains quite limited. Most students rated their confidence below five out of ten and struggled to explain or identify morphemes correctly. Their performance supports these self-assessments, highlighting a gap between their perceived and actual understanding.

These findings point to the necessity of exploring students' abilities in identifying and applying derivational and inflectional morphemes. This study aims to determine the students' level of skill in recognizing these morphemes within sentences across different contexts reading, writing, speaking, and listening to better understand how morphology awareness influences overall language proficiency. Using a quantitative descriptive research method, data were collected through tests designed to assess students' ability to distinguish and apply morphemes appropriately. The test involved multiple-choice items and fill-in-the-blank questions based on the frequency and use of morphemes in English. The findings from this study are expected to provide valuable insights into students' morphological awareness and inform educators on how to improve instruction methods for enhancing vocabulary and

grammatical skills in language learning.

B. Research Method

This research utilized a descriptive quantitative design to assess the ability of third-year students in the English Study Program at Universitas Riau in recognizing and differentiating denotative and inflectional morphemes within sentences. The study was conducted during the academic year 2025/2026, with data collected on November 6th, 2025. The population consisted of students enrolled in the morphology course, and a cluster sampling technique was employed to select entire classes to ensure representativeness and efficiency, especially given the dispersed nature of students across different classes at the university.

The primary instrument used was a comprehensive morphological test consisting of forty questions, thirty multiple-choice items and ten fill-in-the-blank questions, adopted and adapted from previous studies (Alotaibi & Alotaibi, 2017) ; Utami & Mujadidah, 2021), focusing on students' recognition of derivational and inflectional morphemes across various categories such as noun, verb,

adjective, and adverb. The test was designed based on the "Morpheme Frequency in English" by Lane, Gutlohn, and Van Dijk (2019), with about 75% of items targeting derivational morphemes and 25% focusing on inflectional morphemes, aligning with the theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of both in language development.

Table 2 Indicator of Morphology Instrument

Types of Morphemes	Word Classes	Number of Questions
Derivational	Noun	12
	Adjective	6
	Verb	8
	Adverb	4
Inflectional	Noun	4
	Adjective	2
	Verb	4
Total		40

The scoring system awarded two points for each correct multiple-choice response and four points for each correct fill-in-the-blank answer, with incorrect responses scored as zero. The validity was established through content validation by morphology experts, while reliability was confirmed via Cronbach's Alpha, with items

showing low correlation being revised or removed to ensure consistent measurement.

The test was administered in a controlled classroom environment, with students receiving standard instructions and supervised during the examination under strict time management of 45 minutes. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics to determine mean scores and percentage achievement in recognizing derivational and inflectional morphemes. The indicators used to measure the students' morphological awareness included the correctness of identification and application of morphemes, analyzed through the distribution of correct responses across the test items. The specific indicators consisted of students' ability to accurately recognize the morphological structure of words and to distinguish between derivational and inflectional types, based on the correctness of their responses in the multiple-choice and fill-in-the-blank sections. The results were statistically analyzed using SPSS to obtain descriptive insights, and if necessary, inferential tests such as t-tests were applied to examine differences in

performance between various groups. This comprehensive approach aimed to provide a clear understanding of the students' morphological competence, thereby informing pedagogical strategies for teaching morphology more effectively.

C. Finding and Discussion

The results of this study revealed that third-year students at the English Study Program in Universitas Riau demonstrated partial proficiency in recognizing and differentiating between derivational and inflectional morphemes, with their overall performance averaging around 52.7%. Specifically, students exhibited greater accuracy in identifying inflectional morphemes, achieving a mean score of approximately 63.59%, indicating their familiarity with grammatical markers such as tense, number, and comparative suffixes, which are frequently encountered in daily language use and follow predictable patterns. Conversely, their performance on derivational morphemes was notably lower, averaging about 53.85%, reflecting challenges in understanding how affixes alter word meaning and class,

particularly in cases involving lexical and semantic shifts.

These findings are consistent with those of Woretma et al. (2024), who reported higher scores in inflectional morphemes compared to derivational ones; however, the current results indicate a more moderate mastery level, suggesting that students' morphological awareness is still developing. The analysis of individual items further demonstrated that students struggled most with derivational items requiring understanding of word-class changes, whereas inflectional forms such as plural nouns and past tense verbs were more reliably identified. This discrepancy highlights the necessity for targeted instructional strategies to enhance students' lexical and morphological understanding, especially in derivational processes. The discussion suggests that limited exposure and vocabulary knowledge may contribute to these challenges, emphasizing the importance of explicit morphology instruction within the curriculum. The indicators, based on students' accuracy in identifying morphemes across test items, confirmed that their ability to analyze and classify morphological structures

is still nascent, with many students correctly identifying only frequent or straightforward examples while faltering on complex derivational forms. These insights reveal that improving morphological instruction and providing ample practice with both derivational and inflectional morphemes are crucial steps toward enhancing learners' lexical and grammatical competence in English.

D. Kesimpulan

The findings of this study indicate that third-year students in the English Study Program at Universitas Riau demonstrate ongoing development in their morphological awareness, yet they have not achieved full proficiency in recognizing and distinguishing between derivational and inflectional morphemes. Students exhibit a stronger understanding of inflectional morphemes, reflected in their higher average scores and greater confidence in identifying grammatical markers such as tense, plurals, and comparatives.

However, their ability to recognize derivational morphemes, which involve meaning shifts and changes in word class, remains relatively limited. This gap suggests that vocabulary

knowledge and morphological awareness are still areas requiring enhancement, as many students struggle with the more complex aspects of word formation. Additionally, students' self-assessment scores and test performances reveal uncertainties and difficulties in applying morphological principles, especially within derivational contexts. Overall, the research indicates that students' morphological competence is still in a stage of development, and more targeted instructional strategies are necessary to improve their understanding of both morphological types, especially derivational forms that are crucial for vocabulary building and lexical richness.

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