

The Students' Comprehension in Identifying Suffix -ing As An Inflection and A Derivation

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan pemahaman mahasiswa dalam mengidentifikasi akhiran -ing sebagai infleksi atau derivasi. Penelitian ini menggunakan deskriptif kualitatif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah 12 mahasiswa Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris semester 6. Nilai mahasiswa yang diambil melalui tes digunakan sebagai data. Nilai selanjutnya dihitung untuk menemukan nilai rata-rata kelas yang digunakan untuk menentukan tingkat pemahaman mahasiswa tentang akhiran -ing. Berdasarkan hasil analisis, pemahaman mahasiswa tentang akhiran -ing termasuk dalam kategori cukup (72,2). Lebih lanjut, penulis menemukan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami kesulitan dalam mengidentifikasi akhiran -ing karena ketidakmampuan mahasiswa dalam memahami fungsi dan peran setiap bagian dari kalimat dalam tata bahasa (*grammar*) bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: Morfologi, Akhiran, Infleksi, Derivasi

Abstract

The research aimed at describing the students' comprehension on identifying suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. This is a descriptive qualitative research. The populations were 12 students of the 6th semester of English Department. The students' scores collected by test were used as the data. The scores were then calculated to find the class average score which determined the students' comprehension level on -ing suffix. Based on the analysis, the students' comprehension on suffix -ing belonged to sufficient category (72,2). Furthermore, the writers found that the students' inability to grasp the function and role of each part of speech in English grammar led the students to misidentify suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation.

Keywords: morphology, suffix, inflection, derivation

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive understanding of morphology is crucial for learning English. It enhances knowledge of word formation and decoding, and improves language skills for effective oral and written communication (Anita et.al, 2014) English language learners often overlook the significance of linguistic abilities, focusing instead on skills and grammar. They often forget that linguistic abilities can be useful in learning language process. When learning English, a person needs to be proficient in four areas: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The four abilities are critical to learning English, thus students must master language components like phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation support the four skills (Sari, 2020). One of the linguistic abilities can be learnt in Morphology.

Although students in Indonesia have studied English for a long time, many of them do not comprehend it and find it challenging to learn. One of the challenges is that they lack vocabulary which plays an obvious role in language communication (Kartikasari et al., 2021). Meanwhile, knowledge of English morphology is also essential for English Department students to use and learn English effectively (Giyatmi et al., 2024). By having a good understanding of Morphology which concerns with word building, the students definitely

can increase their vocabulary size by applying the process of morphology such as affixation. Good vocabulary mastery influences the students' language skill learning such as reading. There is a connection between vocabulary competence and reading comprehension. The key to comprehending reading passages is vocabulary. An individual's ability to understand a reading text is positively correlated with their vocabulary. Because one needs to be proficient in vocabulary to understand the reading passage (Puspitasari et al., 2020).

Morphology is a fundamental branch of grammar that deals with the internal structure of words and the interrelationships between them (Carstairs-Mccarthy, 2002). Although grammar is commonly associated with tenses and sentence construction, these aspects are actually part of the syntax branch of linguistics. Morphology plays a vital role in word formation. Morphology is an integral part of grammar, as it pertains to the structure of words and their relationships with other words. Aziz defines morphology as a linguistic branch that concentrates on word structure and formation (Aziz et al., 2019).

Morphology is the branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure and formation of words. Morphology encompasses the mental system involved in word formation (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). Morphology is defined as the study of the internal structure of words, the systematic covariation in the form and meaning of words, and the combination of morphemes to produce words (Haspelmath & Sims, 2013). Another definition mentions that morphology is a subdiscipline of linguistics that systematically studies the relationship between form and meaning (Booij, 2005). To conclude Morphology focuses on the internal structure of words, including their formation and meaning.

Affixation, the process of adding prefixes or suffixes to words, is one of the crucial topics in morphology. Affixation is a highly productive morphological process that involves attaching a bound morpheme, known as an affix, to a morphological base (Manova, 2014). Affixation exclusively involves bound morphemes, which are affixes that are attached to a base word, which can be either a simple or complex structure (Nurjanah et al., 2018). This process is a major source of word formation, alongside compounding and blending. According to Todd (1987), there are two types of morphological processes: derivation morphology and morphological process (Kusumawardhani, 2015)

Inflection creates new words without changing the word class, while derivation forms new words by changing the word class. Inflectional morphology maintains the category, meaning, and grammatical properties of the base word, without creating new words (LaCara, 2012). As Bauer notes, inflectional morphology is closely related to syntax. This means that word formation is a key aspect of inflectional morphology (Kusumawardhani, 2015). Furthermore, Todd in (Kusumawardhani, 2015) asserts that inflectional morphology never results in a change of class. The researchers confidently concluded that inflectional morphemes are bound morphemes that alter the meaning without changing the word class in a sentence.

Katamba states that inflectional morphology follows consistent syntactic rules that do not alter lexical identity, while derivational morphology is unpredictable and changes lexical identity (Katamba, 1993). Boey further explains that derivational affixes are bound morphemes that modify the word class or part of speech (Bagiya, 2017). Bauer distinguishes between derivation, a morphological process that generates new morphemes, and inflection, a process that produces different word forms from the same lexeme. Bauer asserts that inflectional formation can be predicted, while derivational formation cannot (Bagiya, 2017).

Derivation and inflection are important processes in English morphology. By adding affixes to base words, new words can be formed. Understanding these processes enables English learners to create a wide range of new words from a single base word. For instance, the word 'act' can be inflected to 'acts', 'acting', or 'acted'. Additionally, the word 'act' can be

derived to 'actor', 'actress', 'action', 'react', 'active', and other words. Understanding derivation and inflection is crucial for vocabulary enrichment and word type or parts of speech recognition. Language learners encounter various affixes, including prefixes and suffixes, which serve different functions and indicate the type of word or part of speech to which the new word is attached. For example, the suffix -able can be added to verbs to create adjectives, such as 'movable' derived from the verb 'move'. This suffix serves as a marker for adjectives derived from verbs.

The writer's experience as a Morphology lecturer suggests that the students often find it challenging to distinguish between inflection and derivation in English, especially when it comes to the suffix -ing. Although the suffix -ing usually signifies a verb in inflection, it can also serve as an adjective or noun in derivation. The following example illustrates this point :

- (1) The baby is crying in her room.
- (2) Her crying is so hard.
- (3) The crying baby is my sister.

These three examples demonstrate three distinct forms of using the suffix -ing. While the forms may appear similar, they belong to different parts of speech. In the first sentence, crying becomes the predicate of the sentence. We must remember that what can be a predicate in a sentence is a verb. Therefore, the suffix -ing is an inflection because there is no change in word class. In the second sentence, her crying is a noun phrase that functions as a subject. Her crying consists of her as a modifier and crying as the headword. The headword in a noun phrase is a noun, so the -ing suffix in the second sentence is a derivation because it changes Cry (Verb) into Crying (Noun). The crying baby in the third sentence is a noun phrase as subject. The crying baby consists of crying as a modifier and baby as a headword. Baby is the headword while crying is a modifier that explains baby, which is a noun. The type of word that functions to explain a noun is an adjective. It means that crying is an adjective. The -ing suffix in the third example is also a derivation because it changes cry (verb) to crying (adjective).

Before starting the material on derivation, one of the writers ever gave a quick quiz consisting of the three sentences used as the examples on the previous paragraph. The students seemed still confused and most of them classified suffix -ing in the three sentences as inflections. They considered that the -ing form on the sentences are classified as Verbs. Based on this phenomenon, the writers would like to know how the 6th semester students' comprehension on identifying suffixes -ing as an inflection or a derivation.

There have been many discussions related to derivation and inflection in English. However, most of them focus on finding derivation and inflection forms found in texts such as novels, recount texts, descriptive texts, and newspaper. (1) Derivational and Inflectional Morpheme in the Jakarta Post (2019) by Sita Maulidina. The purpose of the studies is to identify the word that formed by inflectional morpheme and derivational morpheme, the manner in which the indicated word developed, and the types of alterations that were detected. (2) An Analysis of Derivational and Inflectional Morpheme in Selected News From Tempo. Co by Tira Nur Fitria. The study aims at identifying the derivational and inflectional morphemes as well as the specific functions of each in the chosen news articles from Tempo.co.

In addition, there is also a research on error analysis on derivation and affixation such as An Analysis on Students' Errors in Using Derivational Affixes. This study aims to determine the kinds of errors and the most dominant error made by the students in using derivational affixes. There are also studies that focus on the use of derivation and inflection in the writing

made by students such as in Investigating the Use of Inflectional and Derivational Morphemes in Academic Written Essays in EFL Contexts in the UAE by Abdelhamid Ahmad Khalil and Emad A.S Abu Ayyash. The study's conclusions showed that inflectional morphemes were more common than derivational morphemes in the writing of learners. Furthermore, the results showed a moderately positive correlation between the quantity of bound morphemes used and the writing quality of the students. The qualitative results revealed several difficulties students had while utilizing morphemes in their writing.

Futhermore, there is research focusing on derivation morpheme only such as Morphology Analysis of Derivational Morpheme on Youtube BBC News. The study found 9 different forms of derivational morphology and another novel sort of derivational morphology was discovered during this research. So far, the writers have not found research focusing on certain derivational affixes such as -ment, -ation, -ence. The writers found an article emphasizing suffix -ing and suffix -ed entitled Derivational Morpheme or Inflectional Morpheme_ A Case Study of "-ing" or "-ed" Word Ending in English Linguistics Teaching by Panpan Cao. He defined both derivational and inflectional morphemes, then showing their differences. Next, the study focused on analyzing the particular morpheme type of "-ed" or "-ing" endings in words and sentences. Finally, he concluded that whether word ending with "-ing" or "-ed" belongs to an inflectional or derivational morpheme depends on whether they express lexical or grammatical meaning.

The writers' study also discussed suffix -ing as derivational or inflectional, however, it has different point of view. The writer focused on the students' understanding of suffix -ing as a derivation or an inflection.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

The writers strategically employed descriptive qualitative in conducting the research. The writers would like to find the students' difficulty when they identified suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. The research population comprises of 12 students of the 6th semester of English Department at Universitas Veteran Bangun Nusantara. The writers collected the data by giving the students a test dealing with identifying the use of suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. The test consists of 6 questions; 2 questions for identifying suffix -ing as an inflection and 4 questions for identifying suffix -ing as an inflection. The test results yielded a score that reflects students' ability to identify -ing suffix as inflection or derivation. After conducting a test on the identification of the suffix -ing, the writers have summarised the students' scores. The test results are used to determine the average score, as well as the highest and lowest scores of the students' comprehension on identifying suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. Furthermore, the writers calculated the average score for each question to determine the order of question from highest to lowest average score. This information hopefully showed the level of difficulty of the questions for the students. It provided valuable insights into the types of questions that pose a challenge for students. In the end, based on the test score the writers would like to find the difficulties experienced by the students on identifying suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table demonstrates the students' scores on their comprehension of the use of suffix -ing as inflection and derivation;

Table 1. The test score

No	Students	Score	Category
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1	Student 1	78,3	Good
2	Student 2	75	Good
3	Student 3	81,6	Good
4	Student 4	73,3	Sufficient
5	Student 5	83,3	Good
6	Student 6	26,6	Poor
7	Student 7	40	Poor
8	Student 8	85	Good
9	Student 9	20	Poor
10	Student 10	60	Sufficient
11	Student 11	41,7	Poor
12	Student 12	56,7	Poor
Class Average Score		72,2	Sufficient

Furthermore, the writers also displayed the distribution of score 10 (the highest score for each question. This distribution hopefully can show that there are difficulties found by the students in identifying suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. The result can be seen in the following table 2.

Table 2. The Distribution of Score 10

No	Students	Students with score 10
1	Question 1	2
2	Question 2	3
3	Question 3	3
4	Question 4	4
5	Question 5	1
6	Question 6	4

In addition, the writers also found the average value for each question in the identification test of suffix -ing as inflection and derivation. The result can be seen in the following table 3.

Table 3. The average score of each question

No	Students	Score
1	Question 6	82
2	Question 3	77
3	Question 4	74
4	Question 2	73
5	Question 2	69
6	Question 5	58

Finally, the writers also reported the students' success in identifying suffix -ing as an inflection and a derivation. The success is identified by the students' ability to answer the question. The result can be seen in the following table 4.

Table 4. The Students' success in identifying suffix -ing

No	Suffix -ing	Percentages of success	Percentage of fail
1	Inflection	66,7%	33,3%
2	Derivation	50%	50%

Discussion

The Students Comprehension on Identifying Suffix -ing as Inflection and Derivation

The analysis of test scores related to the identification of the suffix -ing as inflection and derivation yielded an average score of 72,2 as seen in Table 1. It is worth mentioning that the highest score is 83.3 and the lowest score is 20. Based on this result, it can be confidently concluded that the students have a sufficient understanding of the suffix -ing as derivation and inflection. It is noteworthy that, despite the average comprehension being in the sufficient category, 5 students (41,6%) belong to the good category, 2 students (16,6%) are in the sufficient category, and 5 students (41,6%) are in the poor category as seen in Figure 1.

There are 41,6% of students classified into the poor category. In addition, the writers found some obstacles probably faced by students when doing the test. Not many students are able to get score of 10 (the highest score) for each question in the test. In fact, out of the 6 questions given during the test, there are no more than 4 students who got a score of 10 in each question. There are only 2 questions (question number 4 and question number 6) that had 4 students with a score of 10. In addition, there were only 2 students who had a score of 10 in question number 1. There were 3 students getting a score of 10 in question number 2 and question number 3. Meanwhile, in question number 5, there is only 1 student who got a score of 10. This result can be seen in table 2 above.

The question number 6 (**Indonesia includes a developing country in Southeast Asia**) received the highest mean score (82). Four students scored a perfect 10, meanwhile, three students scored 8, one student scored 7, and four students scored under 5.

The question number 3 (**Authorities are looking at a raft initiatives**) obtained the second-highest average score of 77. Three students achieved a score of 10, two students achieved a score of 8, two students achieved a score of 7, one student achieved a score of 6, and four students achieved a score under 5.

The question number 4 (**The meanings are studied in Semantics and Pragmatics**) had the third-highest mean score of 74. There were 4 students scoring 10, one student scoring 8, one student scoring 6, one student scoring 5, and five students scoring under 5.

The question number 1 (**I'm craving from Shihlin right now**) had a mean score of 73, which was the fourth-highest among all problems. The scores were as follows: two students scored 10, two students scored 8, two students scored 7, two students scored 6, and four students scored under 5.

The question number 2 (**The voters could go to the polling station and show their ID cards to be able to vote**) achieved the fifth-highest average score of 69. The scores were as follows: three students scored 10, three students scored 7, and six students scored under 5.

The mean score for question number 5 (**My father used to like a wall climbing**) was the lowest at 58. The distribution of scores was as follows: one student scored 10, two students scored 8, one student scored 7, and eight students scored under 5.

From table 3, it can be concluded that the easiest question for the students is the question number 6 since the average score is the highest (82). Besides, there are 4 students getting 10. The question deals with identifying suffix -ing as an adjective derivation. It is in line with Ramadhani and Olivia research. They mentioned that adjective is the part of speech that is most easily recognized by students (Ramadhani & Ovilia, 2022). They argue that students easily identify adjectives. Meanwhile, the most difficult question for the students is the question number 5 with the lowest average score (51) and there is only one student could get score 10 and eight students scored under 5. The question deals with identifying suffix -ing as a noun derivation. Still according to Ramadhani and Olivia, Noun is one of the parts of speech that is difficult to identify besides Pronoun and preposition. With this result, they argued that students still did not understand well the types of nouns (Ramadhani & Ovilia, 2022).

The students' difficulty while working on the test questions was reflected in the average score for each question. The average score also demonstrated the level of difficulty experienced by students. Based on the observation on the students' answers, the writers found that the students found no significant difficulty on identifying suffix -ing as an inflection instead of as a derivation. There are more students (66,7%) who can identify suffix -ing as an inflection successfully than those who can identify suffix -ing as a derivation (50%). This finding is in line with the research done by Wenwen (2020). The fact that there are too many derivational affixes to list all of them makes derivational morphemes more challenging. Even though inflection and derivation have distinctive characteristics and distinctions, there is still a number of difficulties that could confound and challenge a learner. In short, learners and teachers find both derivation and inflection challenging (Wenwen, 2020). Meanwhile, another research reported that based on the questionnaire, learners are not convinced that understanding inflectional affixes is easier than derivational affixes or vice versa (Wibowo & Rismawati, 2022).

Suffix -ing as An Inflection

There were 66,7% of students (Table 4) that could identify the -ing suffix as an inflection, but with varying explanations. Suffix "-ing" is used to construct an adjective or noun, it works as a derivational morpheme, whereas when grammatical meanings such as tense and aspect are expressed in a sentence, it is an inflectional morpheme (Cao, 2023). The writers found that the students identified suffix -ing as inflection in two ways;

(1) Based on the predicate of the sentences

In building a sentence, each component of speech plays a specific role. The students comprehension of part of speech may make it easier for them to put together a

sentence (Ramadhani & Ovilia, 2022). During the research, the students identified suffix -ing by observing the predicate of the sentence. Based on the research done by Mainar Fitri in 2017, the subject and predicate of a sentence can be used to identify the main ideas (Fitri, 2017). The example of the student's work can be seen in the following;

I'm **craving** for some **Shihlin** right now.

S P Obj. Adv. Of Time

Craving (word with suffix -ing) in the example above is the predicate of the sentence so Craving must be Verb. The formation process of the verb is as follow;

Crave (V) + -ing ---- Craving (V)

The morphological process above clearly does not produce a new part of speech for the word with the -ing suffix. This is the concept of inflection.

(2) Based on the Tense used in the sentences

The students seemed to determine that the words with suffix -ing are verbs by observing the tenses used in the sentences. For example; **Authorities are looking at a raft of initiatives**. So, here the students did not mention that the word with suffix -ing (**looking**) is the predicate of the sentence when determining it as a verb. The students only observed that the sentence uses Present Continuous Tense because of the use of to be + V-ing. Suffix -ing refers to grammatical meaning because it is used as a present participle and helps to construct the simple present progressive or present continuous tense with TO BE (Cao, 2023).

So the process of word formation is

Look (V) + -ing ----- Looking (V).

The affixation process does not change the part of speech, so suffix -ing is classified as an inflection.

Meanwhile, 33,3% of the students incorrectly identified the -ing suffix as an inflection. Upon reviewing their answers, the writers found that students' lack of understanding on the function and role of each part of speech in the sentence, such as Noun or Noun Phrase functions as Subject or Object, Verb functions as Predicate, etc. led them to misidentify suffix -ing as an inflection. The same finding was obtained by Fitri in her research related to students' understanding of English sentences through understanding sentence patterns. The students were unable to identify the dependent phrase, complement, subject, verb, and connectors. Besides, they have little mastery on the parts of speech positioned as subject, verb, complements, and dependent clauses so they have problem in understanding English sentences (Fitri, 2017)

During the research, the students were able to determine the sentence elements such as Subject, Predicate of a sentence, but it seemed that they were still confused on what parts of speech could serve as the subject, object and predicate in a sentence. However, they still found it confused when they had to clarify what part of speech is for the Subject, for the Object, and for the predicate. Here is one of the students' answers included in this case;

I'm **craving** for some **Shihlin** right now.

S P Obj. Adv. Of time

It can be seen from the sentence above; in the beginning stage, the student was able to determine the elements of the sentence. Craving is a predicate craving is a verb. However, on the student's worksheet, the student classified Craving into an adjective instead of a verb. So the morphological process according to the students was;

Crave (V) + -ing ----- Craving (Adj)*

In the end, the student concluded that there was a change in the part of speech in the morphological process so that the student categorized the suffix -ing as derivation. The classification of Craving as an adjective was certainly incorrect and it led to the students' failure in identifying suffix -ing as inflection.

Suffix -ing as A Derivation

The writers found that 50% of the students successfully identified the 'ing' suffix as a derivation based on the sentence elements. Students initially looked for the elements of the sentence by determining the subject, predicate, and object, adverb of place or time in the sentence. Then they analyzed the sentence elements that have Verb-ing in them. For example;

The voters could go to the polling station

Subj. P Adv. Of place

The Verb-ing (**Polling station**) is the Adverb of Place in the sentence. **The polling station** is a Noun Phrase consisting of '**Polling**' (A modifier) and '**Station**' (Headword). A modifier is a part of a phrase that functions to explain the Headword. Therefore, in the example above, **polling** explains **station** which happens to be a noun. An adjective is a word that describes a noun. Therefore **polling** (Mod.) is an adjective through a morphological process:

'Poll (V) + -ing' ----- 'Polling (Adj)'

From the morphological process, there is a change in the part of speech from Poll (Verb) to Polling (adjective), therefore the suffix -ing here is a derivation.

Meanwhile, 50% of students were still unsuccessful in determining the -ing suffix as derivation. Students frequently misidentified the -ing suffix as derivation because they lacked a clear understanding of the function and role of each part of speech in the sentence, such as Noun or Noun Phrase functions as Subject or Object, Verb functions as Predicate, etc. Some students were still confused on understanding the function of adjective, adverb, noun, and verb. Those led on the students' difficulty in identifying suffix -ing as derivation. The students' comprehension of part of speech influences and helps them correctly use a certain part of speech in a sentence (Ramadhani & Ovilia, 2022). Here is an example of student's answer dealing with the case;

My father used to like a wall climbing.

S P Obj.

At this stage, the students were able to determine the elements of the sentence. **A wall climbing** in this context is the object of the sentence. In addition, **a wall climbing** belongs to a Noun Phrase. Therefore **climbing** is the headword and wall is the modifier. However, the students mistakenly identified **Climbing** as a verb due to the -ing suffix attached to it and their lack understanding of Noun Phrase. The morphological process based on the student's answer can be seen on the following explanation;

Climb (V) + -ing ---- Climbing (V)*

Based on the student's explanation above, there is no changing on the word Climb (V) after it was added with suffix -ing, so it was classified as inflection. The students' error in identifying **climbing** as a verb led to the students' error in identifying the suffix -ing as an inflection.

CONCLUSION

It is crucial for students majoring in English to understand the -ing suffix as both inflection and derivation. This understanding will help them determine the part of speech of the words with suffix -ing, enlarge their vocabulary, and improve their grammar knowledge too. It will also show them that not all words with suffix -ing are verbs and many students still do not understand it. The test results show that English students include to a sufficient category on understanding the -ing suffix as inflection and derivation, with a score of 72.2.

From the observation of students' abilities related to understanding the -ing suffix, it is clear that there is problem that leads to student difficulties in identifying suffix -ing as an inflection or a derivation. It includes the students' inability to comprehend the role and function of each word in a sentence. For instance, they often struggle to distinguish between nouns, verbs, and adjectives. They also frequently misidentify noun phrases.

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