COLLEGE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN USING AFFIXATION ON FORMING WORDS

Khatimun Nisa' Urasida[1]*, Yuli Herman[2], Risza Dwiputri[3]

[1] Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin
*Email: khatimunnisa694@gmail.com

[2] Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin
Email: yhman2000@yahoo.com [3] Universitas
[3] Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin e-
Email: risza.dwiputri@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the ability of sixth-semester students in the English Education Study Program at UMMY Solok (2023/2024) to use affixation in word formation. Using a descriptive quantitative method, the study involved 17 students, divided into two groups through random sampling. Six students participated in a tryout, while ten students were selected as the research sample. Data were collected through a test assessing students' understanding of prefixes, suffixes, and their combinations. The findings indicate that students performed well with prefixes, fairly with suffixes, and poorly when combining prefixes and suffixes. Errors were most common when students were unsure of how to correctly attach affixes to root words. These results highlight the need for targeted instructional strategies to enhance students' morphological competence. The study contributes to curriculum development and suggests incorporating additional affixation-focused materials and training. Future research may further explore affixation difficulties and their impact on linguistic proficiency.

Keywords: *Students' ability, affixation, forming word, morphology and syntax class*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary plays a crucial role in language acquisition, as it enables learners to comprehend and express meaning effectively. While grammar provides structural rules, vocabulary serves as the foundation for communication. Even grammatically correct sentences may fail to convey meaning if learners lack sufficient vocabulary knowledge. One essential aspect of vocabulary development is word formation, particularly affixation, which is a key topic in Morphology and Syntax. Affixation refers to the process of adding morphemes, the smallest units of meaning, to create new words. These morphemes can take the form of prefixes, which are added at the beginning of a base word, or suffixes, which are attached to the end of a base word. Mastering affixation is essential for students as it helps

expand their vocabulary, enhances reading comprehension, and improves writing skills in both academic and professional contexts.

The study of morphology, as defined by Lieber (2016), involves analyzing the internal structure of words and how smaller units of meaning combine to form new lexical items. Morphology is considered one of the most fundamental components of linguistic knowledge, as it helps learners recognize patterns in word formation. Similarly, Sims and Haspelmath (2010) emphasize that affixation is a fundamental aspect of morphology that plays a critical role in the linguistic development of students. Affixation not only enables learners to comprehend new words but also allows them to deduce meanings from unfamiliar vocabulary, making it an essential skill in language proficiency. In the context of English language education, affixation is particularly important for university students, as academic writing requires the use of complex words derived from root words through the addition of affixes. However, despite the importance of affixation, many students struggle to use it effectively. One common problem is the difficulty in distinguishing between prefixes and suffixes, which often leads to errors in word formation. Additionally, students frequently make mistakes when selecting the appropriate affix for a given word, affecting their accuracy in constructing grammatically and semantically correct words. Another challenge is the misapplication of affixation rules, particularly when combining multiple affixes in a single word. These difficulties indicate a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, suggesting that while students may understand affixation conceptually, they face challenges in applying it correctly in real-world linguistic contexts.

This research focuses on students in the English Education Department at FKIP UMMY Solok, where Morphology and Syntax is a core course that introduces students to the principles of word formation. Although students are exposed to affixation in their coursework, their actual proficiency in using affixes accurately remains unclear. Many students rely on memorization rather than analyzing word structures, which may contribute to persistent errors. Therefore, a systematic investigation is needed to determine students' actual abilities in using affixation and to identify the specific areas where they struggle.

Several studies have explored students' ability to use affixation, but gaps remain in the research. For example, Sitti Musdalifah (2019) and Silviana Endah (2020) conducted studies on high school students, whereas this study focuses on college students, who require a higher level of complexity in affixation, particularly in academic writing. Additionally, Azmi Xuwaida (2013) and M. Somathasaan (2018) employed descriptive quantitative methods to examine affixation in general usage, but they did not specifically address academic word

formation. Furthermore, Adebola Omolara Adebilese (2013) examined affixation processes without considering how the academic environment influences students' affixation abilities. Given that higher education settings demand more advanced language use, it is crucial to investigate how well university students understand and apply affixation in their studies.

To address these gaps, this research aims to analyze college students' ability in using affixation for word formation, focusing on students in the English Education Department at Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin Solok University. By evaluating their proficiency in identifying and applying affixes, this study seeks to uncover common difficulties students face and propose strategies for improvement. The findings of this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of affixation usage in higher education, providing valuable insights for educators, curriculum designers, and language instructors. Furthermore, this study may serve as a foundation for future research exploring the relationship between affixation proficiency and overall academic performance.

Given the significance of affixation in language acquisition and academic success, this research aims to bridge the existing gaps by offering a detailed analysis of students' performance in prefix, suffix, and mixed affixation usage. By identifying students' strengths and weaknesses, the study aspires to enhance instructional methods and develop more effective learning materials that facilitate better understanding and application of affixation in linguistic and academic contexts.

METHOD

Research Design

This research was conducted by using descriptive quantitative research design. The research aims to determine the students' ability in using affixation on forming words in Morphology and Syntax on English Education Department FKIP UMMY Solok the 2023/2024 academic year.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consists of 17 sixth-semester students from the English Education Department at UMMY Solok in the 2023/2024 academic year. Out of the 17 students, 10 students were selected as the sample for the study, while the remaining 7 students participated in a tryout session. The chosen sample was considered appropriate because they have learned about Morphology and Syntax class. The researcher used a random sampling method. From a total of 17 students in the sixth semester, 7 students were randomly selected

as the tryout and 10 students were randomly selected as the sample. The entire population was used as a study sample, therefore was a need for random sampling. This was frequently done when there is a small population (less than 30 people).

Instrument

The types of instrument that were used in the research is test that refers to the teaching materials taught in Morphology and Syntax class. The test type was multiple choice because the multiple-choice tests are effective for assessing students' ability to use prefixes and suffixes, as they evaluate specific language skills like word formation. Researcher carried out a multiple-choice test. Each test that was tested was in the form of prefix and suffix. In doing the test of each item, students were asked to answer prefix and suffix questions.

In detail the indicators of prefix and suffix to be tested can be seen in the following table:

Table 1: Indicators of Test in Affixation

No	Indicator of Test	Sub Indicator of Test
1	The use of prefix	Using "in"
		Using "un"
		Using "dis"
		Using "il"
		Using "im"
2	The use of suffix	(Derivational Suffix)
		Using "ion"
		Using "ness"
		Using "ity"
		Using "ment"
		(Inflectional Suffix)
		Using "s"
		Using "er"
		Using "es"
		Using " 's "
3	The use of prefix and suffix	Using "un and - ly"
		Using "in and - ity"
		Using "multi and -ism"
		Using "un and - ed"
		Using "ir and - ible"
		Using "anti and - ism"
		Using "de and - ion"
		Using "em and - ment"
		Using "mis and - ing"

Techniques of Data Collection

To get the data, researcher used multiple choice test which the topic relates on how to use affixation. There were some procedures of collecting data; first, researcher prepared the

instrument of the test. Before giving the test, the researcher gave instruction and guidelines on multiple choice test. After that, the researcher distributed the test to the students. Next, the students were asked to answer the test. Then the researcher gave 30 minutes for students. The students had 1 minute to answer each question. Lastly, the researcher collected the test.

Technique of Data Analysis

After collecting the data, did the scoring process by the help of two scorer, first the lecturer of Morphology and Syntax class and the last one is researcher herself. After the scoring process, the researcher analyzed students' ability in using affixation on forming word in Morphology and Syntax class including prefix and suffix. The test consisted of 30 items, each item got 3,3 point, for a total of 100 points. The researcher computed all of the scores each student receives after finishing all of the questions.

In analyzing data, the researcher used the formula according to Sudijono (2018) below:

1. Scoring the test

$$M = \frac{X}{N} \times 100\%$$

Description:

M= individual score

X= the number of correct answers

N= the number of items

2. Classifying the score

To classify students' scores in using affixation on forming word, the formulation by Sudijono (2018) was used as the following:

Table 2: Criteria of Students' Ability

Score	Information
80-100	Excellent
66-79	Good
56-65	Fair
40-55	Poor
0-39	Very poor

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This section presents the results of the affixation test conducted among 17 students in the Morphology and Syntax class. The test aimed to evaluate students' ability to use affixation correctly in forming words by assessing their understanding of prefixes and suffixes. Specifically, the findings highlight the errors made in distinguishing between prefixes and suffixes and in selecting the appropriate affixes in different word formation contexts.

1. Data Display: Affixation Test Results

The affixation test consisted of 30 multiple-choice questions divided into three sections:

1.   Prefixes (e.g., un-, re-, dis-, mis-)
2.   Suffixes (e.g., -tion, -ment, -ing, -ly)
3.   Mixed Prefix-Suffix (combining both affix types in word formation)

The table 3 below presents the number of correct responses for each section by 10 selected students.

Table 3: Data Display of Affixation Test Results

No.	Student	Prefix	Suffix	Mixed Prefix-Suffix
1	Student 1	7	6	4
2	Student 2	10	7	3
3	Student 3	7	5	5
4	Student 4	6	8	6
5	Student 5	6	6	4
6	Student 6	6	8	5
7	Student 7	10	3	2
8	Student 8	8	5	3
9	Student 9	9	5	5
10	Student 10	10	5	5
Total		79	53	42

The results show that students performed better in identifying prefixes (79 correct answers) than suffixes (53 correct answers) and mixed affixation (42 correct answers). The lower scores in suffix-related and mixed affixation questions suggest that students struggle more with the correct application of suffixes and combining prefixes with suffixes in word formation.

2. Students' Overall Performance

The students' scores were categorized into three proficiency levels: Good ($\geq$ 65%), Fair (50–64%), and Poor ($<$ 50%). Table 4 summarizes the students' performance.

Table 4: Student Scores and Performance Categories

Student	Score	Category
Student 1	57	Fair
Student 2	67	Good
Student 3	57	Fair
Student 4	67	Good
Student 5	53	Poor
Student 6	63	Fair
Student 7	50	Poor
Student 8	53	Poor
Student 9	63	Fair
Student 10	67	Good

Among the 10 students, 3 students (30%) obtained Good scores, 4 students (40%) received Fair scores, and 3 students (30%) were categorized as Poor. The distribution suggests that a significant number of students (70%) had difficulties in using affixation correctly, particularly with suffixes and mixed affixation.

Errors in the Poor and Fair categories were primarily linked to confusion between derivational and inflectional suffixes, as well as incorrect application of prefixes when forming academic words.

Discussion

The discussion analyzes the findings in relation to linguistic theories and previous research on affixation. It explores the reasons behind students' difficulties and suggests strategies for improving their understanding of affixation. One of the primary difficulties observed in this study was students' inability to distinguish between prefixes and suffixes correctly. This aligns with Lieber (2016), who emphasizes that while prefixes and suffixes are fundamental in word formation, students often struggle with affix placement and meaning interpretation. The findings revealed that students performed better in identifying prefixes, with 79 correct answers, compared to suffixes, with only 53 correct answers. This suggests that suffixes pose a greater challenge, possibly because their function often requires a deeper

understanding of grammatical categories and semantic changes. A similar issue was noted in Musdalifah's (2019) study on high school students, where suffix usage was found to be the most challenging aspect of affixation. However, since the current study focuses on college students, the findings indicate a need for more advanced instruction on affixation, especially in academic contexts where precise word formation is essential.

Another key issue identified in the study is students' limited understanding of derivational and inflectional suffixes. According to Sims and Haspelmath (2010), derivational suffixes change a word's meaning or grammatical category, such as in happy to happiness, whereas inflectional suffixes modify tense, number, or degree without altering meaning, as in walk to walked. The test results suggest that students frequently misused derivational suffixes when forming academic words. This is consistent with Somathasaan (2018), who found that ESL learners often apply incorrect suffixes when forming complex words, particularly in academic settings. These findings highlight the need for explicit instruction in distinguishing between derivational and inflectional suffixes to enhance students' morphological accuracy.

The lowest-scoring section in the test was the mixed prefix-suffix category, with only 42 correct answers. This suggests that students struggle not only with individual affixation rules but also with combining prefixes and suffixes correctly within the same word. Research by Adebilese (2013) suggests that affixation errors are more frequent in complex word formation due to native language interference. This could explain why students in this study faced difficulties when dealing with both prefixes and suffixes simultaneously. The ability to manipulate affixation correctly is crucial for developing academic vocabulary, and the findings suggest that more targeted instruction is needed to help students master this aspect of word formation.

The results of this study indicate a clear gap between theoretical knowledge and the practical application of affixation among students. Despite learning affixation rules, students still struggle with contextual word formation in academic writing. To address these gaps, Endah (2020) suggests that explicit morphological instruction, including structured affixation exercises, could significantly enhance students' ability to form words accurately. Additionally, interactive and contextual learning strategies, such as word-formation games and affixation-focused writing tasks, could improve retention and application of affixation rules. By incorporating these methods into the curriculum, educators can help students develop a deeper understanding of affixation and improve their overall proficiency in academic writing.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study assessed the ability of sixth-semester students in the English Education Department at Universitas Mahaputra Muhammad Yamin to use affixation, specifically prefixes and suffixes, in word formation within the Morphology and Syntax class. The findings revealed that while students demonstrated relatively good proficiency in using prefixes, with a success rate of seventy-nine percent, they struggled more with suffixes, particularly in distinguishing between derivational and inflectional forms, achieving only a fifty-eight percent success rate. Additionally, their lowest performance was in combining prefixes and suffixes within a single word, with only forty-two percent accuracy. These results indicate a need for a more structured and practice-oriented teaching approach to affixation, emphasizing affix combinations and contextual application. To address these challenges, lecturers should adopt a more contextual and interactive teaching approach, incorporating visual aids, case-based exercises, and group discussions to enhance students' understanding of affixation. Students are encouraged to engage in extensive reading, maintain word journals, and practice word formation exercises to improve their affixation skills. Additionally, utilizing online learning resources and discussing affixation concepts with peers and instructors can further reinforce their learning. Future research should explore affixation in more depth, particularly its application in academic writing and its impact on overall language proficiency, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' abilities in this area.

REFERENCES

Adebilese, A. O. (2013). *Affixation processes in English and Yoruba: A contrastive analysis*. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 3(8), 231-238.

Arikunto, S. (2014). *Prosedur Penelitian: Suatu Pendekatan Praktik*. Rineka Cipta.

Ary, D., et al. (2010). *Introduction to Research in Education*. Nelson Education.

Bauer, L. (2012). *Beginning Linguistic*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bunau, E., & Yusof. R.M. (2018). An Example of Morphological Process trough Affixation in Budayuh-Somu Language. *Lingua Cultura*. Vol. 12(2): 204-215.

Creswell, J, W. (2012). *Identifying of a Research Problem*. Educational Research. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

Endah, S. (2020). *The effectiveness of morphological instruction on students' affixation proficiency in academic writing*. Journal of English Language Studies, 5(2), 112-125.

Handoko, M. D. (2019)**.** *English morphology.* Kota Metro: CV IQRA Penerbitan.

Hasani, Mousavi, & Zarei. (2014). The effect of the number of affixes on vocabulary learning of Iranian intermediate EFL students. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, 6*(2), 35-45.

Haspelmath, M., & Sims, A. (2010). *Understanding morphology* (2nd ed.). London: Routledge.

Katamba, F. (2006). *Morphology* (2nd ed.). Virginia: Macmillan Education Australia.

Lieber, R. (2016). *Introducing morphology* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Musdalifah, S. (2019). *A study on students' difficulties in using English affixation at high school level*. Journal of Linguistics and Language Teaching, 3(1), 55-67.

Sims, A., & Haspelmath, M. (2010). *Understanding morphology* (2nd ed.). Hodder Education.

Somathasaan, M. (2018). *Challenges in learning English affixation among ESL learners: A case study at university level*. International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature, 7(4), 112-119.

Sudijono, A. (2018). *Pengantar statistik pendidikan*. Rajawali Pers.

Xuwaida, A. (2013). *Affixation in English: A study on derivational and inflectional morphemes*. English Linguistics Journal, 7(2), 98-110.

Yadav, M. K. & Yadav, M. S. (2021). A Theoretical Overview on the Impacts and Strategies of Morphology in English Language Teaching to the L2 Learners. *International Journal of Research*. Vol. 8(3): 311-331.

Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. New York: Cambridge University Press.