

***A STUDY ON THE MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS OF THE  
SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS OF ENGLISH STUDY PROGRAM  
FKIP UNIVERSITAS RIAU***

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***Abstract:*** *The objective of the present study was to find out the morphological awareness of the second-year students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau. It was descriptive research that involved 35 second-year students as the sample by using cluster random sampling. The data were collected by giving a Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) adapted from Apel and Lawrence (2011) to see their morphological awareness in terms of the syntactic aspect: Derivations and Inflections. For analyzing the data, the descriptive statistics (mean score and standard deviation) were calculated and the students' individual scores were grouped into some levels of morphological awareness. It was revealed that the second-year students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau who participated in the present study had low level of morphological awareness (M=49.71). They slightly performed better in Inflections part than in Derivations part. Thus, it is recommended to conduct a further research to investigate the motives behind the students' low performance on morphological awareness.*

***Key Words:*** *Morphology, Morphological Awareness*

**KAJIAN TENTANG *MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS*  
MAHASISWA TAHUN KEDUA PROGRAM STUDI  
PENDIDIKAN BAHASA INGGRIS  
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**Abstrak:** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui *morphological awareness* mahasiswa tahun kedua Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau. Disain penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif yang melibatkan 35 mahasiswa tahun kedua sebagai sampel menggunakan teknik *cluster random sampling*. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan *Morphological Awareness Test (MAT)* yang diadaptasi dari Apel and Lawrence (2011) untuk melihat *morphological awareness* mahasiswa dari aspek sintaksis: *Derivations* dan *Inflections*. Untuk menganalisis data, statistik deskriptif data tersebut (nilai rata-rata dan standar deviasi) dihitung dan skor individu para mahasiswa dikelompokkan ke dalam beberapa tingkat *morphological awareness*. Ditemukan bahwa mahasiswa tahun kedua Program Studi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas Riau yang berpartisipasi dalam penelitian ini memiliki *morphological awareness* yang rendah ( $M = 49,71$ ). Mereka sedikit lebih baik pada bagian *Inflections* daripada *Derivations*. Dengan demikian, disarankan untuk melakukan penelitian lebih lanjut untuk menyelidiki motif di balik rendahnya kinerja mahasiswa pada *morphological awareness*.

**Kata Kunci:** Morfologi, Pengetahuan Morfologi

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way. Words have a crucial role in communication. The group of words that are semantically acceptable and grammatically correct, allow us to communicate effectively (Raja, 2014). Although the concept of a word is naturally clear, it is not easy to define it objectively, e.g. Is a person who makes dolls is a *dollar*? (Carlisle & Nomanbhoy, 1993).

It shows that morphology must begin by trying to formulate the word form. Morphology studies the internal structure of words and the way the word is formed. Theoretically, the students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau learn about word form since the first year of their study. After taking Introduction to Linguistics class, the students are expected to have background knowledge on word form and recognize morphemes. Related to morphology, Kuo and Anderson (2006) define morphological awareness as the students' ability to reflect on morphemes and manipulate them along with word-formation rules in a language.

Koda (2000) shares that the syntactic aspect deals with the knowledge of affixation may change the syntactic categorization. It involves the ability to provide inflected, derived, and phonological change-derived forms in order to manipulate the base words (Carlisle & Nomanbhoy, 1993). Moreover, Zhang and Koda (2013) state that understanding syntactic aspect is helpful for the students to analyze complex sentences by considering the base words that are provided. The syntactic aspect can be viewed by the ability to generate morpheme to complete a sentence that suits the context (Aydin & Yildirim, 2017; Wolter & Gibson, 2015; Varatharajoo, Asmawi, & Abedalaziz, 2014; Apel, 2014; Apel & Lawrence, 2011; Berninger et. al, 2009; Carlisle & Nomanbhoy, 1993).

After doing an informal interview towards some students before conducting the present study, it was revealed that some of the students do not really can tell which morpheme is used in a given context. Though many researchers have conducted similar studies, yet the main focus of the problem in the present study is whether the students are able to reflect on morpheme, then manipulate it into a new meaning in a given context. This ability may be seen by the syntactic aspect of morphological awareness. Therefore, this study will answer a question "How is the morphological awareness of the second-year students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau?"

## METHODOLOGY

### *Participants*

There were 35 second-year students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau involved in the present study as the sample by using cluster random sampling. The sample was decided by using a lottery. The participants were required to pass the Introduction to Linguistics subject in their previous semester of the study.

### *Instrument*

The instrument used in the present study is Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) adapted from Apel and Lawrence (2011) to see the students' morphological awareness

in terms of the syntactic aspect. For this test, the participants needed to respond to the test items by completing the missing part of the sentence with an appropriate word that needed to be added by a morpheme. The response to the question was a short answer. There were two parts of the test as follows; Derivations and Inflections. The test items in Derivations were supposed to be answered by adding a derivational suffix to the provided base word of the missing part of the sentence (e.g., *farm: My uncle is a \_\_\_\_\_*. The correct word to complete the sentence is *farmer*). Meanwhile, in Inflections, the participants were instructed to add an inflectional suffix to the provided base word of the missing part of the sentence (e.g., *shoe: I have two \_\_\_\_\_*. The correct word to complete the sentence is *shoes*). There were 20 test items in total. The derivational morphemes used in the present study were noun-forming, verb-forming, and adjective-forming morphemes. Meanwhile, the inflections morphemes used here consists of plural, regular past tense, third-person singular, irregular past participle, and progressive.

### ***Data Collection Technique***

The data of Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) were collected after a try-out test conducted to see whether the test item is valid and reliable. The try-out test was done in a different class from the real test. Due to the social distancing policy, both try-out test and real test of the study were collected via online. The instrument was carried out in the form of a link that syncs to Google.

### ***Data Analysis Technique***

For analyzing the data, the descriptive statistics (mean score and standard deviation) of the MAT were initially calculated. In determining the validity of the test items, the difficulty level of the test items was considered by using the following formula:

$$P = \frac{B}{JS}$$

Details:

*P* = difficulty index

*B* = the number of students who answer correctly

*JS* = the number of students taking the test

(Supardi, 2017)

To answer the research question of the present study, which is “How is the morphological awareness of the second-year students of English Study Program FKIP Universitas Riau?”, the students’ individual scores were grouped into some levels of morphological awareness as follows:

Table 1. The Students' Morphological Awareness Level

Score	Level
76-100	High
51-75	Moderate
26-50	Low
0-25	Very Low

(Anita, Ramadhiyanti, and Kurniawati, 2014)

## Results

Thirty-five students responded to MAT which consists of 20 test items. The descriptive statistics from the test were analyzed and it was revealed that the students' mean score was categorized low as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of the Real Test

	N	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean Score	S <sub>t</sub>
<b>MAT</b>	35	75	20	95	49.71	22.39

The students' individual scores were grouped into the level of morphological awareness. It was found that there were 16 students, which is 45.17% of the total sample had low morphological awareness level. On the other hand, 6 students (17.14%) were categorized in high level, 7 students (20%) had moderate level and lastly, the other 6 students (17.14%) belonged to very low level. The number of high and very low achievers in the test is equal to 6 students respectively. Then 7 students had moderate level of morphological awareness. To conclude, the percentage of the low achievers is the highest among others, nearly covered half of all achievers in 45.71%, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3. The Students' Morphological Awareness Level

No.	Score	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Level
1.	76-100	6	17.14%	High
2.	51-75	7	20%	Moderate
3.	26-50	16	45.71%	Low
4.	0-25	6	17.14%	Very Low

Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) which adapted from Apel and Lawrence (2011) has two parts that need to be answered by the participants; Derivations and Inflections. The following table presents the descriptive statistics results from each part of the test.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Each Part of MAT

	<b>N</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Min.</b>	<b>Max.</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>S<sub>t</sub></b>
<b>Derivations</b>	10	9	1	10	47.43	26.38
<b>Inflections</b>	10	8	2	10	52	24.95

N = Number of the test items in each part

It was revealed from Table 4 that the students performed better in Inflections, making 52 as the mean score and categorized moderate. Meanwhile, the students' mean score in Derivations was 47.43 and categorized low.

Furthermore, the suffixes both in Part I: Derivations and Part II: Inflections were analyzed to see the students' performance. The result showed that in terms of the syntactic aspect of morphological awareness, the students are more aware of derivational suffix in adjective-forming morphemes than noun-forming and verb-forming morphemes. Besides, the inflections suffix that the students mostly answered correctly was the ones that applied to plural, followed by regular past tense, third-person singular, progressive, and lastly, irregular past participle.

## Discussion

The results of the present study pointed out that the second-year students had low morphological awareness in terms of the syntactic aspect. Meanwhile, the second-year students are supposed to aware enough of morphemes once they finish Introduction to Linguistics. For further analysis, it was found that they performed better in Inflection (M=52) than Derivations (M=47.43), making a slight gap in the students' morphological awareness level between derivations and inflections.

The finding of derivations awareness indicates that the students are not able to distinguish among derived words that have an identical root yet differ in the suffixes. It may be caused by the large number of derivational affixes that exist, along with the process involved, e.g. phonological and/or orthographic changes (Zhang and Koda, 2013). This finding is also supported by the previous study, Varatharajoo, Asmawi, and Abedalaziz (2014) that is in terms of synthetic ability, the participants tend to perform poorly.

After the finding of inflections awareness was obtained, it is revealed that the students are aware enough of the inflectional suffixes, signifying the awareness of the grammatical relationship between words in a sentence by making the mean score categorized moderate. This finding corresponds to Carlisle and Nomanbhoy (1993) and Yasin and Jawad's (2015) that the students turn out to be more familiar with the knowledge of inflections than derivations.

As the finding of this study shows that the students tend to lack of morphological awareness, the aspects impacting the students' poor performance are needed to be reconsidered. The possible aspects may refer to the students' background knowledge, the students' current situation and context, or the construction of the test in context (in sentences).

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

The present study aimed to find out the morphological awareness of the second-year students of English Study Program Universitas Riau. The findings of the study showed that they had low morphological awareness in terms of the syntactic aspect. Furthermore, they performed better in Inflections than Derivations. It indicated that the students are more aware of the use of morphemes in a given context in Inflections than Derivations. Adjective-forming morpheme was the most successful derivational suffixes to be answered by the students correctly (59% on average), while inflectional suffix that applied to plural (-s) was the most successful one (90% on average).

### Recommendation

The results of the present study led to several suggestions concerning further morphological awareness research. The possible aspects may refer to the students' background knowledge, the students' current situation and context, or the construction of the test in context (in sentences). A replication of the present study is suggested to be conducted by the next researchers by exploring the same or even different aspects. The next researchers are also recommended to analyze and determine the students' real problems of morphological awareness. It was revealed that the student's morphological awareness was at low level in the present study, thus particular research is recommended to be established in order to clarify the motives behind it through informal interviews to have a vivid description about the students' morphological awareness.

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