


English Education Students' Understanding of Inflectional Morphology in The Jakarta Post Articles

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to describe students' understanding of inflectional morphology in articles in The Jakarta Post. Previous research generally focuses only on identifying the types and frequency of inflectional morphemes in narrative texts, thus limited studies examining students' understanding in the context of authentic news texts. This study used a qualitative descriptive approach involving 15 English Education students who had taken a Morphology course. Data were collected through written tests and semi-structured interviews, then analyzed using the Spradley model. The results showed that students understood regular inflectional forms such as plural (-s/-es) and present participle (-ing) well, but experienced difficulties with irregular forms such as irregular past tense, irregular plural, and comparative and superlative. Difficulties were influenced by a lack of mastery of grammatical concepts, minimal practice in authentic texts, and limited vocabulary. These findings demonstrate the importance of integrating morphology learning with contextual text analysis to improve students' understanding.

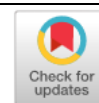
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INTRODUCTION

English language is an essential communication tool for human life, English language use as international language. Therefore, we have to able to master the language and its elements such as vocabulary, structure, and so forth. The language itself consists of two aspects namely form and meaning. In relation to meaning, the smallest meaningful in language is morpheme. Inflectional morphology is a branch of morphology that examines changes in word form to indicate grammatical function without changing word class or basic lexical meaning. Linguistically, inflectional morphology does not produce new lexemes, but rather simply adjusts word form to suit the grammatical context within a sentence (Yule, 2010).

According to Yule (2010), inflection is a morphological process that adds grammatical affixes to a word without changing its word category, such as the addition of -s to the plural or -ed to the past tense. Meanwhile, Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2018) explain that inflectional morphemes function to indicate grammatical relations such as tense, number, aspect, comparison, and agreement, and are productive in the English grammatical system.

In English, inflectional morphemes are relatively limited in number, yet they play a crucial role in the syntactic structure and meaning of sentences (Fromkin et al., 2018). Forms such as the plural (-s/-es), past tense (-ed), present participle (-ing), comparative (-er/more), and superlative (-est/most) demonstrate how inflection serves as markers of grammatical relationships between elements in a sentence. Therefore, the study of inflectional morphology

emphasizes not only identifying forms but also understanding the relationship between word structure and syntactic function within a sentence (Yule, 2010; Fromkin et al., 2018).

Morphemes in morphology are the smallest units carry meaning or fulfill some grammatical function. The word *'house'* consist of one morpheme, and because it stands by self it can be called a *free morpheme*. In the word *'houses'* there are two morphemes, *'house'* is free and *'s'* is a bound morphem'. Nida gives a simpler definition of morphology cited Ilzamudin Ma'mur and As'ari B. Fathoni, he states that –morphology is the study of morphemes and their arrangements in forming words. There is similar situation with bound morphemes which are subdivided into derivational and inflectional morpheme (Ma'mur & Fathoni, 2009). Morphologists usually talk in quite different terms about inflection and derivation (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010).

Inflectional morphemes do not create new word, but only show grammatical funtions of a word (Ma'mur & Fathoni, 2009). Nick Cipollone, Steven Hartman Keiser and Shravan (1998) explain about characteristics of the inflectional, following below: Do not change meaning or part of speech, e.g., *big, bigg-er, bigg-est* are all adjective, and are suffixes only (in English). For example, the word *"wants"* in the title *"Youtube Kids Wants to Help Preserve Indonesian Folktales"* on The Jakarta Post article is a process inflexional, from verb (want) to verb (wants), its process is from want then added *-s*, the process do not create a new word only verb. The process is conducted beacause subject is the third person singular present.

Based on the background of the study above, this research aims to identify students' ability in analyzing of inflectional morphemes on The Jakarta Post article. The writer is interested to choose The Jakarta Post because it is news on English language to national or international, there are some morphemes process specially are inflectional and derivational. The writer will focus on using The Jakarta Post Article is taken in The Jakarta Post website, then student will analyze the scrift of The Jakarta Post Article to measure student understanding of inflectional morphology.

The Jakarta Post was chosen as the data source for this study based on its credibility and national and international reach. As one of Indonesia's leading English-language newspapers, The Jakarta Post presents news texts using formal language and grammatical structures that conform to academic and journalistic English standards. Therefore, the articles in this publication provide authentic, contextual, and contemporary examples of inflectional morphology.

Furthermore, analyzing authentic media texts is crucial in language learning because it allows students to interact directly with real language use, not just with examples of made-up sentences in textbooks. Authentic texts demonstrate how grammatical forms and functions are used within the context of a complete discourse, enabling students to not only recognize morphological forms in isolation but also understand their grammatical role in constructing meaning. By analyzing news texts, students can develop more contextual, critical, and applicable linguistic skills in understanding English language structures as they are used in real-life communication.

Finally, based on the backgrounds above, the writer would like to conduct research in students' ability on morphological process especially inflectional process in a word. Then the writer would like to carry out the research under the title *"Students' Comprehension on Inflectional Morphology in The Jakarta Post Article"*.

The result of this study will be able to provide the information about inflectional morphology process found in The Jakarta Post Article and students' understanding on morphological process of inflection on The Jakarta Post article. the readers will be to increase their knowledge about inflectional morphology. The result of this research also will be useful for the teachers who are going to teach about inflectional morphology and use The Jakarta Post Article as the media teaching. To the writer, the result of this research will give new knowledge about inflectional morphology on The Jakarta Post Article as the media teaching. The last is for other researchers who would like to conduct the same issue of this study can find out the additional information and references trough reading this study.

In this research, the researcher summarizes some relevant previous studies from a journal. The First, a journal article with title "Analysis of Inflectional Morpheme from A Short Story Entitled the Three Little Pigs Retold By Flora Annie Steel (1922)" written by Cahyono et al. (2023). This study analyzes the types and functions of inflectional morphemes in an English narrative text. The research uses qualitative and quantitative descriptive methods to identify the frequency and function of affixes that change word form while maintaining their grammatical categories. The results reveal various endings, such as -s, -ed, -ing, -er, and -est, that function as markers of number, time, or degree of comparison. This study helps map the distribution patterns of inflectional morphemes in narrative texts and provides a concrete picture of their use in written language. The function for this research is to provide an example of inflectional morpheme analysis in applied (narrative) texts and a method for collecting morpheme data.

The Second, a journal article with title "An Analysis of Inflectional Morphemes in a Short Story 'The Child's Story' by Charles Dickens" written by Nur Ifadloh et al. (2022). This study examines 108 inflectional morphemes in a short story, focusing on the type of morpheme dominance. It was found that the plural marker "-s/-es" and participial forms such as "-ing" and "-ed" were the most frequently occurring morphemes. This analysis also revealed various types of inflectional morphemes and their proportions in the text corpus. The function for this research is to show the proportion and types of inflectional morphemes that frequently appear in narrative texts.

Although previous studies have analyzed inflectional morphemes in narrative texts such as short stories, most of these studies have focused solely on identifying the types and frequencies of inflectional forms in the texts. These studies have not deeply examined students' understanding of inflectional morphology in authentic text contexts, particularly English news texts such as those in The Jakarta Post. Therefore, there is still limited research exploring how students understand inflectional forms and their grammatical functions in real journalistic contexts and the specific difficulties they experience in the analysis process.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. This approach aims to describe in-depth the level of students' understanding of inflectional morphology contained in The Jakarta Post article. Qualitative research was chosen because the focus of the study is on the students' understanding process, errors, and interpretation patterns of inflectional forms. The descriptive approach was used because this study focuses on describing students' understanding of inflectional morphology without conducting specific treatments or experiments.

This study aims to describe students' comprehension of inflectional morphology contained in articles in The Jakarta Post. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), qualitative research emphasizes meaning, process, and interpretation, making it highly suitable for analyzing students' understanding of inflectional morphology forms in authentic English texts.

The qualitative approach also allows researchers to identify the types of errors, levels of understanding, and difficulties experienced by students in recognizing and understanding the use of inflectional morphology such as plural, tense, and comparative forms (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

Respondents

This study used purposive sampling, a method of intentionally selecting a sample based on specific considerations or criteria relevant to the research objectives. In qualitative research, this technique is used to select participants deemed to have the most relevant and in-depth information regarding the phenomenon being studied. Sample selection was not random, but rather based on criteria established by the researcher (Creswell, 2014). The respondent criteria in this study included: (1) Active students in the English Language Education Study Program. (2) Having taken a Morphology course. (3) Willingness to participate in the research.

The respondents in this study were students majoring in English Language Education at The State Islamic University Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. Respondents were selected from sixth-semester students who had taken courses in Morphology or related linguistics, so they were assumed to have basic knowledge of morphology, especially inflectional morphology, and thus were able to provide relevant data regarding their level of understanding and the difficulties they experienced.

The number of respondents in this study was 15 students. This number of respondents is considered adequate for qualitative research, which focuses on data depth. Qualitative research does not emphasize sample size, but rather on information richness and achieving data saturation (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Data saturation occurs when additional data collection no longer yields significant new information (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) stated that in qualitative research, data saturation can often be achieved with a relatively small number of participants, even in the range of 12–15 participants for studies with homogeneous characteristics.

Thus, the number of 15 students in this study was considered adequate because the data obtained showed recurring patterns of answers and difficulties and no significant variations in information were found after the last participant was interviewed.

Data Collection Techniques

The data collection techniques in this study were written tests and semi-structured interviews. The tests were used to measure students' understanding of inflectional morphology in the context of authentic texts, while the interviews aimed to delve deeper into students' thought processes and difficulties. According to Brown (2004), a language test is a systematic tool for measuring specific abilities or competencies based on predetermined learning objectives. Therefore, the instrument development in this study was tailored to the goal of measuring the ability to analyze the form and function of inflectional morphology.

Written Test

The written test used was an essay and identification (analysis test). According to Brown (2004), tests are an effective tool for measuring students' abilities and understanding of specific aspects of language. The essay format was chosen because it measures in-depth understanding, not just mechanical form recognition. Students were asked to read an article from *The Jakarta Post* and then: (1) Identify words containing inflectional morphemes. (2) Classify the types of inflections. (3) Explain their grammatical function in sentences. (4) Explain changes in form and meaning before and after inflection.

This analytical test is in line with Bachman and Palmer's (1996) view that a good language assessment should measure the ability to understand the relationship between linguistic form and its communicative function.

The test consists of 20 questions, including 8 questions on form identification, 6 on inflection type classification, and 6 on grammatical function analysis. This number is considered adequate for qualitative research because it allows for comprehensive exploration of understanding without compromising the depth of data analysis. In language research, data quality is prioritized over item quantity (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

The inflectional aspects tested include: Nominal Inflection (regular and irregular plural); Verbal Inflection (regular and irregular past tense, present participle, third-person singular); and Adjectival Inflection (comparative and superlative). The test focuses not only on morphological form but also on grammatical functions, such as marking tense, number, agreement, and comparison within sentence structure. This aligns with the view of Fromkin, Rodman, and Hyams (2018), who state that inflectional morphemes serve to mark grammatical relationships within the syntactic system, not simply changes in word form.

Interviews

Interviews were used to obtain more in-depth data regarding students' understanding of inflectional morphology, particularly regarding the difficulties and strategies used in understanding inflectional forms. The interviews used in this study were semi-structured, providing the researcher with a guideline for questions but still allowing respondents to develop their explanations (Creswell, 2014).

According to Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), interviews allow researchers to directly explore respondents' experiences, perceptions, and perspectives. Interviews were conducted with several respondents selected based on test results to obtain more representative data. All interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis in this study used Spradley's analysis model. This model was chosen because it allows researchers to analyze qualitative data systematically and in-depth through grouping meanings, categories, and relationships between concepts (Spradley, 1980). The data analyzed came from written tests and student interviews regarding their understanding of inflectional morphology in The Jakarta Post articles.

Domain Analysis

Domain analysis is the initial stage in Spradley's model, which aims to identify general categories (domains) from the data obtained. At this stage, researchers group the data based on similarities in meaning related to students' understanding of inflectional morphology (Spradley, 1980).

In this study, the domains identified included: (1) Types of inflectional morphology, (2) Students' level of understanding of each type of inflection (3) Errors that occur in identifying and understanding inflectional morphology (4) Difficulties and factors causing errors

Data from tests and interviews were coded and classified into these domains to obtain a general overview of students' understanding.

Taxonomic Analysis

The next stage is taxonomic analysis, which is the process of organizing domains into a more detailed and systematic structure. At this stage, researchers develop subcategories within each domain to examine the hierarchical relationships between data elements (Spradley, 1980).

For example, the domain "types of inflectional morphology" is developed into several subcategories, such as: (1) Plural inflections (-s, -es) (2) Tense inflections (-ed, -ing) (3) Third-person singular inflections (-s) (4) Comparative inflections (-er, -est)

Each subcategory is analyzed based on students' level of understanding, the types of errors they make, and examples of usage in The Jakarta Post article. This analysis helps researchers understand students' comprehension patterns in a more structured way.

Componential Analysis

Componential analysis is a more advanced stage that aims to identify differences in meaning (contrasts) between categories within a single domain. At this stage, researchers compare students' understanding of various types of inflectional morphology to identify the characteristics that distinguish each category (Spradley, 1980).

In this study, componential analysis was conducted by comparing: (1) Inflectional forms that students found easy and difficult to understand (2) Systematic and non-systematic errors (3) Understanding based on grammatical function and sentence context

The results of this analysis are presented in the form of comparative tables and narrative descriptions to clearly demonstrate differences in students' levels of understanding of each form of inflectional morphology.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

This chapter presents the results of a study on students' comprehension of inflectional morphology in articles from The Jakarta Post. Data were obtained through written tests and in-depth interviews. The analysis was conducted using Spradley's ethnographic analysis model, which includes four main stages: domain analysis, taxonomic analysis, componential analysis, and cultural theme analysis.

In general, the research findings indicate that students have varying levels of understanding of various forms of inflectional morphology. This variation is influenced by the complexity of the form, the regularity of the morphological pattern, the frequency of

occurrence in the text, and their understanding of grammatical function within the context of the sentence.

Domain Analysis

Domain analysis in this study aims to identify broad categories emerging from the research data. Based on the coding of students' test answer sheets and interview transcripts, four major domains were identified in relation to students' understanding of inflectional morphology in articles from *The Jakarta Post*. These domains include: (1) the types of inflectional morphology found in the articles, (2) the level of students' understanding of those forms, (3) the types of errors made by students, and (4) the factors that contribute to their difficulties in comprehending and applying inflectional morphology accurately.

These four domains form the main framework for understanding students' comprehension of English inflection.

Domain of Inflectional Morphology Types

The first domain relates to the types of inflectional morphology found in articles published by The Jakarta Post. Based on the text analysis, several dominant inflectional forms were identified, including plural forms marked by *-s* and *-es*, past tense forms indicated by *-ed* as well as irregular verb changes, present participle forms ending in *-ing*, third person singular verbs marked by *-s*, comparative forms using *-er* and *more*, and superlative forms using *-est* and *most*. These findings show that the articles contain a wide range of inflectional variations that require students to recognize grammatical changes related to number, tense, aspect, agreement, and degree.

The plural form is the most frequently occurring type of inflection because news articles often contain plural nouns such as "students," "policies," and "programs." Meanwhile, the past tense appears in reporting events that have already occurred.

Domain of Student Understanding Level

Based on the test results, student understanding levels were categorized into four levels: high, medium, and low. The test results showed that most students had a good understanding of plural forms and present participles. However, with irregular past tenses and complex comparative-superlative forms, most students fell into the sufficient and low categories and experienced difficulty with these forms. Interview data showed that students felt more confident when working on problems that had a fixed and consistent pattern.

Domain of Error Types

The third domain identifies the types of errors that occurred, namely: form identification errors, grammatical function errors, misinterpretation of meaning in context, and overgeneralization errors. Overgeneralization errors often occur when students apply regular rules to irregular verbs, such as writing "goed" as the past tense of "go."

Domain of Difficulty

The analysis also identified several contributing factors to students' difficulties in understanding inflectional morphology. These include a lack of mastery of fundamental grammatical concepts, minimal exposure to and practice with authentic reading materials, an overreliance on memorization rather than conceptual understanding, and limited vocabulary knowledge. Based on interview data, students acknowledged that they more frequently learned grammar through isolated exercises rather than through analyzing real or contextualized texts, which limited their ability to recognize and apply inflectional forms in authentic language use.

After coding the test answer sheets and interview transcripts, the researchers identified four main domains that represent the students' understanding of inflectional morphology in The Jakarta Post articles. To provide a more systematic overview of the identification results, the classification of the domains found is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Domain Analysis Results

No	Primary Domain	Subcategory / Description	Key Findings
1	Types of Inflectional Morphology	Plural (-s/-es), Past tense (-ed & irregular), Present participle (-ing), Third person singular (-s), Comparative (-er/more), Superlative (-est/most)	Plural and past tense are most dominant appear in article

2	Level of Understanding Student	Very good, Good, Medium, Low	Understanding high on plural and -ing; low on irregular past and comparative-superlative
3	Type of Error	Identification form, function grammatical, interpretation meaning, overgeneralization	Overgeneralization is most common in irregular verbs
4	Difficulty Factor	Lack of grammar mastery, minimal practice text authentic, memorization, limitations vocabulary	Difficulty increases in forms that do not consistent and contextual

The domain analysis identified four broad categories representing patterns in students' comprehension of inflectional morphology. The first domain maps the types of inflections that appear in news texts. The second domain illustrates variations in students' levels of understanding. The third domain shows patterns of errors, while the fourth domain reveals factors contributing to difficulties. These four domains form the basis for a more in-depth analysis in the next stage.

Taxonomic Analysis

The taxonomic analysis stage is carried out by organizing the domain into a more detailed and systematic structure.

Taxonomy of Inflectional Morphology

Nominal Inflection

Regular plural (-s, -es)

Irregular plural

Students demonstrated a high level of understanding of regular plurals, but experienced difficulty with irregular plurals.

Verbal Inflection

Regular past tense (-ed)

Irregular past tense

Present participle (-ing)

Third person singular (-s)

The present participle had the highest success rate due to its consistent form pattern. Conversely, the irregular past tense showed the highest error rate.

Adjectival Inflection

Comparative (-er/more)

Superlative (-est/most)

Students often make mistakes when choosing between the use of -er and -more, especially for two-syllable adjectives.

To provide a clearer picture, the following is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Taxonomy of Inflectional Morphology

Main Category	Subcategory	Characteristics	Example in Article	Level of Understanding
Nominal Inflection	Regular plural (-s/-es)	Consistent pattern	<i>students, policies, programs</i>	High
	Irregular plural	Form No regular	<i>children, people</i>	Medium-Low
Verbal Inflection	Regular past (-ed)	Consistent pattern	<i>announced, implemented, reported</i>	Medium
	Irregular past	Change total form	<i>went, took, made</i>	Low
	Present participle (-ing)	Form consistent	<i>increasing, developing, improving</i>	High
	Third person singular (-s)	Adding -s/-es to verbs	<i>states, shows, indicates</i>	Medium
Adjectival Inflection	Comparative (-er/more)	Depends amount syllables	<i>higher, more effective</i>	Low
	Superlative (-est/most)	Show level highest	<i>highest, most significant</i>	Low

It appears that regular forms like "students" and "developing" are easier to understand because their morphological patterns are consistent and frequently appear in news texts. Conversely, irregular forms like "went" or complex comparative forms like "more effective" require a more abstract and contextual understanding of rules, resulting in higher error rates.

Hierarchical Relationship

Students' level of understanding of each category shows a hierarchical pattern:

Table 3. Hierarchy of Levels of Understanding

Level of Understanding	Form Inflection	Example in Article
High	Regular plural, Present participle (-ing)	<i>students, developing</i>
Medium	Third person singular (-s), Regular past (-ed)	<i>states, announced</i>
Low	Irregular past, Comparative & Superlative are complex	<i>went, more effective, most significant</i>

Taxonomic analysis organizes domains into a more systematic hierarchical structure. Classification is based on nominal, verbal, and adjectival categories. The hierarchical pattern shows that the level of regularity of forms is directly proportional to the level of student understanding. The more consistent the morphological pattern, the higher the student's success rate in identifying and understanding the form.

Componential Analysis

Componential analysis is conducted to identify contrasting differences between categories.

Contrast Based on Easy and Difficulty of Understanding

Table 4. Contrast Based on Easy and Difficult of Understanding

Comparative Aspects	Easy to understand	Difficult to Understand
Regularity of form	Regular form	Irregular shape
Pattern consistency	Consistent (-s, -ing)	Inconsistent (go-went, take-took)
Relationship of meaning	Concrete meaning	Contextual meaning
Frequency of exposure	Often appears	Rarely practiced

The table shows that students were more successful in understanding inflectional forms that have a fixed pattern and are frequently encountered. Conversely, forms that require an understanding of syntactic and semantic context showed higher error rates.

Contrast Based on Grammatical Function

Students find it easier to recognize inflections that stand alone in form, but have difficulty understanding their syntactic function within a sentence. For example, some students can identify the "-ed" form, but cannot explain whether it functions as a past tense or a past participle in a particular sentence structure.

Table 5. Contrast Based on Grammatical Function

Aspect	Shape Identification	Understanding Syntactic Functions
-ed form	Easily recognized as a past marker	It is difficult to distinguish between past tense and past participle
-ing form	Easy to recognize	It is difficult to distinguish as a gerund or present participle.

Students tend to be able to recognize morphological forms superficially (surface recognition), but have difficulty determining syntactic function within a sentence context. This indicates that morphological understanding has not been fully integrated with syntactic competence.

Systematic vs. Non-Systematic Errors

Systematic errors are most commonly found in Irregular verbs, Comparative forms with two syllables, and Superlatives in complex sentences. Non-systematic errors occur more often due to a lack of attention to detail.

Table 6. Systematic and Non-Systematic Errors

Type of Error	Dominant Form	Type of Error
Systematic	Irregular verbs, two-syllable comparatives , complex superlatives	Error pattern repetitive
Non- Systematic	Various form	Error Because not enough thorough

Systematic errors indicate a conceptual deficiency in understanding certain morphological rules, especially in forms that don't follow common patterns. Meanwhile, non-systematic errors are more related to technical factors such as accuracy and concentration.

Discussions

This section discusses the research findings by interpreting them based on relevant morphological theories. The findings regarding students' understanding of inflectional

morphology in The Jakarta Post articles show patterns that can be theoretically explained through morphological concepts proposed by experts such as George Yule, Victoria Fromkin, and Martin Haspelmath. This interpretation emphasizes aspects of regularity of form, grammatical function, morphological productivity, and the integration of morphology and syntax.

High Understanding of Regular Inflectional Forms

The research results show that students have a high level of understanding of regular inflectional forms such as the plural -s/-es and the present participle -ing. Theoretically, this aligns with George Yule's (2010) opinion, which states that inflectional morphemes in English are limited in number and are largely systematic and productive.

Regular plurals and the -ing suffix have consistent patterns and can be applied to many words without complex base form changes. In morphological theory, productive processes are easier to learn because they follow general, generalizable rules. Martin Haspelmath (2010) explains that morphological productivity allows speakers or learners to apply the same rules to a variety of new lexemes without having to memorize them individually.

From a language acquisition perspective, pattern regularity reduces cognitive load. Students simply need to understand one basic rule and then apply it to a variety of contexts. Furthermore, news articles like The Jakarta Post naturally contain numerous plurals and present participles, so their high frequency reinforces understanding through repeated exposure. Thus, students' success in understanding regular forms can be explained by a combination of rule consistency and frequency of use in authentic texts.

Difficulties with Irregular Forms and Morphological Exceptions

In contrast, students experienced significant difficulty with irregular past tenses and irregular plurals. This finding supports the theory that distinguishes between rule-governed inflections and lexically stored forms. According to Victoria Fromkin et al. (2018), irregular forms do not follow general morphological patterns and therefore cannot be predicted by a single rule. Therefore, forms like "went", "took", or "children" rely more on memorization than on rule application.

Overgeneralization errors, such as the use of "goed" as the past tense of "go," indicate that students are attempting to apply the regular (-ed) rule to an irregular form. This phenomenon aligns with the theory of morphological acquisition, which states that learners tend to master general rules before understanding exceptions. This means that these errors are not simply due to ignorance, but rather part of the process of developing an internal rule system within the learner.

Furthermore, students also had difficulty distinguishing the function of the -ed form as a past tense and as a past participle. This indicates that their understanding tends to be focused on form recognition and not fully on grammatical function within sentence structure. Theoretically, inflection not only marks changes in form but also grammatical relations such as tense, aspect, and agreement. When students are unable to link form to its syntactic function, it means that the integration between morphological and syntactic competencies is not optimal.

Comparative and Superlative Forms: Interaction of Morphology and Phonology

Students' difficulties in understanding comparative and superlative forms, particularly in determining the use of -er/-est or more/most, can be explained by the interaction between morphology and phonology. The choice of comparative form in English depends not only on grammatical function but also on the number of syllables and word stress patterns. According to Martin Haspelmath, morphological processes are often influenced by phonological constraints. Therefore, comparative rules are not purely morphological but involve consideration of syllable structure. Students who do not understand this principle tend to experience confusion in choosing the correct form.

This shows that morphological competence requires an understanding across linguistic aspects. When students only understand that comparative means "more" but not its distribution rules, errors become more frequent. Thus, poor understanding in this category

can be theoretically explained as a result of the complexity of rules involving more than one language subsystem.

Surface Recognition and Functional Understanding

A important finding in this study is the discrepancy between the ability to identify inflectional forms and the ability to explain their grammatical function in sentence contexts. Students were relatively able to recognize endings such as -s, -ed, or -ing, but were unable to always explain their role in syntactic structures. Theoretically, this indicates that their morphological awareness remains at a superficial level. In linguistic theory, inflection serves as a marker of grammatical relations within a sentence. If students only recognize forms without understanding their function, their competence has not reached a complete morphosyntactic level.

In other words, understanding morphology must be integrated with understanding syntax. The -ing form, for example, can function as a gerund or a present participle depending on the context of the sentence. The inability to distinguish between these functions suggests that learning morphology needs to be directly linked to the analysis of sentence structure.

The Role of Authentic Text in Morphology Learning

The use of The Jakarta Post articles as authentic material provides a real-world context for students to analyze inflectional morphology. Theoretically, authentic text-based learning supports a communicative approach that emphasizes language use in real contexts.

The frequency of regular forms in news texts helps students recognize patterns naturally. However, exposure alone is not enough to overcome difficulties with irregular forms. This suggests that learning morphology requires a combination of contextual exposure and explicit explanations of rules and exceptions. From a constructivist perspective, students construct understanding through interaction with texts. However, for deeper understanding, analytical guidance that systematically connects form, function, and meaning is necessary.

CONCLUSIONS

This study concludes that students' understanding of inflectional morphology in The Jakarta Post articles is significantly influenced by the level of pattern regularity and form complexity. Regular and productive inflectional forms are easier to understand because they follow consistent rules and appear frequently in the text. Conversely, irregular forms and forms that require functional analysis within a sentence context tend to pose greater difficulties. The findings also indicate that some students are still at the stage of formal form recognition and are not yet fully able to integrate inflectional forms with their grammatical functions within syntactic structures. This confirms that understanding morphology cannot be separated from understanding syntax and meaning in the context of language use. The use of authentic texts makes a positive contribution to demonstrating the practical application of inflectional morphology, but still requires explicit explanations of the rules and exceptions. Therefore, morphology learning should be conducted contextually and integratively, emphasizing the relationship between form, function, and meaning so that students' morphological competence develops more comprehensively. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of morphological studies, particularly in the realm of inflectional morphology in the context of English language learning. This research not only identifies inflectional forms in authentic texts such as The Jakarta Post articles, but also analyzes students' level of understanding of their grammatical functions in syntactic contexts. The findings of this study strengthen the morphological theory proposed by George Yule and Victoria Fromkin that regularity of morphological patterns significantly influences the ease of acquisition and understanding of inflectional forms. Practically, this research provides implications for morphology teaching in English Language Education study programs by emphasizing the importance of learning that focuses not only on recognizing forms but also on grammatical functions in sentence and discourse contexts. The use of authentic texts and special emphasis on irregular forms and comparative–superlative forms are recommended to improve students' morphological competence more comprehensively.

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