

## Morphology and Syntax: The Relationship Between Word Formation and Sentence Structure in Indonesian Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the fundamental relationship between morphology and syntax in Indonesian with a focus on the process of word formation and its implications for sentence structure. Using a qualitative approach based on literature studies, the research analyzed various scientific literature to identify morphosyntactic patterns in the Indonesian language. The results of the study show that morphological processes such as affixation, reduplication, and composition have a significant impact on the syntactic function of words in sentences. Derivative affixation has proven to be the most productive in changing the category of words as well as their grammatical function. The study identified five main patterns of systematic and predictable morphosyntactic relationships. The application of generative theoretical frameworks, X-bar theory, and word-based approaches provides a comprehensive understanding of morphosyntactic interactions. The pedagogical implications emphasize the importance of integrative learning that connects morphology with syntax to improve students' linguistic competence. Morphosyntactic error analysis revealed a systematic pattern stemming from a lack of understanding of the relationship between word form and function and regional language interference. Handling strategies include explicit learning, counterproductive approaches, and the use of adaptive technology. This research contributes to the development of Indonesian linguistic theory and the improvement of the quality of language learning.*

**Keywords:** Morphology; Syntax; Indonesian Learning

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## INTRODUCTION

Indonesian as a national language has a central role in formal and informal communication in various contexts of people's lives. From a linguistic perspective, the understanding of language structure cannot be separated from the two main branches of linguistics, namely morphology and syntax. Morphology examines how words are formed through the processes of affixation, reduplication, and composition, while syntax examines how words are arranged into meaningful phrases, clauses, and sentences. These two fields of study are closely related and often overlooked in Indonesian language learning at the secondary and higher education levels. The process of morphological word formation has a significant impact on the syntactic function of an element in a sentence, for example when the base verb is affixed to a noun, the change will change its position and role in the sentence structure (Rusminto, 2022). This phenomenon shows that morphology and syntax are not stand-alone entities, but rather interact with each other to form a complex and dynamic linguistic system.

In the context of Indonesian learning, understanding the relationship between morphology and syntax still faces various obstacles. Students often have difficulty identifying changes in word function after undergoing morphological processes, which in turn affects their ability to compose effective sentences. Syntactic errors that often appear in students' written work often stem from a lack of understanding of the process of word formation and the word categories it produces. For example, the use of improper affixes can change the meaning and syntactic function of words in sentences, resulting in ungrammatical

constructions. This problem is exacerbated by a learning approach that tends to separate the study of morphology and syntax as independent topics, without showing a functional relationship between the two in the practical use of language. In fact, the integration of morphological and syntactic understanding is very necessary to improve students' overall language competence.

Previous research has indicated the importance of an integrated approach in linguistic learning. Morphosyntax analysis makes a significant contribution to a more comprehensive understanding of the structure of the Indonesian language. Language errors at the sentence level are often rooted in poor morphological understanding, especially in the process of derivation and inflection. On the other hand, (Rumilah & Cahyani, 2023) stated that the relationship between word forms and their syntactic functions is an important foundation in developing good language skills, especially in the context of learning Indonesian as a second language. The integration of morphology and syntax studies in learning can improve students' ability to analyze complex sentence structures. However, specific studies that explore in depth how morphological processes affect syntactic structures in Indonesian learning are limited, especially those that integrate theoretical perspectives with pedagogical applications (Rumilah & Cahyani, 2023).

Based on these problems, this study is focused on exploring the relationship between morphological word formation and sentence structure in the context of Indonesian language learning. The formulation of the problem proposed includes how morphological processes affect the syntactic function of

words in sentences, what patterns of relationships form between morphology and syntax in Indonesian, and how understanding of these relationships can be applied in effective Indonesian language learning. The purpose of this research is to comprehensively analyze the relationship between the process of word formation and sentence structure, identify patterns of morphosyntactic relationships in Indonesian, and formulate pedagogical implications for the development of more integrative and contextual Indonesian learning (Kusuma et al., 2021). Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution in the field of Indonesian linguistics as well as practical applications in improving the quality of language learning in educational institutions, especially in developing students' linguistic competencies that include understanding morphology and syntax (Rizka Dwi Agustina, 2021).

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the library research method which aims to explore in depth the relationship between morphology and syntax in the formation of Indonesian words and sentence structures. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to conduct descriptive and interpretive analyses of the linguistic phenomena that are the focus of the study. The library research method is implemented by collecting, reviewing, and analyzing various sources of scientific literature relevant to the research topic, including journal articles, linguistic textbooks, and other academic publications that discuss the morphology, syntax, and morphosyntax of the Indonesian language. Literature research was chosen because it is able to provide a strong and comprehensive theoretical

foundation to understand complex linguistic phenomena without having to collect primary data in the field.

The data in this study is sourced from the literature which includes national and international journal articles, linguistic reference books, and previous research results that have relevance to the study of morphology and syntax of the Indonesian language. The criteria for selecting data sources include the suitability of the topic with the research focus, the credibility of the author and publisher, and the updating of the priority publication in the range of 2021 to 2025 to ensure that the information used reflects the latest developments in the field of Indonesian linguistics. Secondary data sources also include official documentation related to Indonesian language learning and curriculum policies that integrate morphology and syntax studies. The data collection process is carried out through documentation studies with systematic recording techniques of concepts, theories, and empirical findings contained in various literature. Each literature source is critically reviewed to identify information relevant to the formulation of the research problem, then recorded and classified based on key themes that include morphological processes, syntactic structure, and morphosyntactic relationships in Indonesian.

The data analysis technique applied in this study is content analysis which is carried out qualitative-descriptively. Content analysis allows researchers to identify patterns, themes, and conceptual relationships that emerge from the various literature studied. The analysis process begins with the data reduction stage, which is sorting and filtering relevant information from all the literature sources that have been collected. The next stage is the

presentation of data in the form of narrative descriptions that organize findings from various literature into coherent thematic categories. Data interpretation is done by comparing various theoretical perspectives, identifying gaps or contradictions in the literature, and synthesizing information from various sources to produce a more comprehensive understanding of morphological and syntactic relationships. The researcher also triangulated the sources by comparing information from various literature to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings. As stated in the study of literature research methodology, validity in library research can be achieved through the use of credible sources and a systematic and objective analysis process (Hapianingsih & Fadli, 2024). The final stage of the analysis is the drawing of conclusions based on the synthesis of all the findings that have been analyzed, then associated with the formulation of the problem and the purpose of the research to produce theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Indonesian learning that integrates morphological and syntactic studies holistically.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Morphological Processes and Their Implications for Syntactic Functions

A study of morphological processes in Indonesian shows that changes in the form of words have a direct impact on the function and position of the word in sentences. Affixation is the most dominant mechanism that is able to change the category of words as well as their grammatical function. (Sirulhaq & Jafar, 2022) asserts that morphological changes in a word can fundamentally affect its syntactic function, especially through the process of derivation that

allows the verb to function as a noun in the construction of the sentence. This phenomenon shows that morphology is not just a way of forming a new word, but a mechanism that determines how the word behaves in the structure of a sentence.

Analysis of the affixation pattern shows clear differences between different types of affixes. The prefix *men-* in the root word "write" produces "write" which still functions as a verb and becomes the predicate of the sentence. In contrast, the confit of the same word on the root results in "writing" that turns into a noun and can serve as a subject or object. (Scott, 2024) Identify that the affixation process is the most productive morphological process in the formation of Indonesian words, with the ability to produce rich word variations while determining their syntactic distribution. This category transformation shows a close relationship between the internal structure of the word and its position in the sentence structure.

In addition to affixation, the process of reduplication also has an influence on the syntactic behavior of words. Full reduplication such as "houses" not only signifies the plural meaning, but also changes the way the word combines with other words in a sentence. (Marsella Desriyarini Gui, 2023) explains that reduplication occurs in specific lexical and grammatical contexts, with the ability to form complex words that affect sentence structure and contribute significantly to the greater richness of grammatical units. The resulting word reduplication has certain limitations in collocating with numbers and designations, in contrast to its singular form. Compositions or compounds such as "sun" or "hospital" also present their own

complexity because they combine two words into a single syntactic function.

Other influential morphological processes are nominalization and adjectivization. The confit of the sentence not only converts the verb into a noun, but also changes the entire structure of the clause into a noun phrase. (Syarif et al., 2025) It is argued that language systems consist of levels of structures that are interrelated through syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationships, including in the relationship between morphology and syntax. For example, the sentence "Students build buildings" can be nominalized to "building construction by students" which functions as a unit of nouns. Meanwhile, the prefix ter- produces adjectives such as "open" or "closed" that can serve as a predicate or descriptor of a noun. These processes prove that morphological changes bring systematic and predictable syntactic consequences in Indonesian.

### **Patterns of Morphosyntactic Relationships in Indonesian**

This study identifies several regular patterns that link morphological forms with syntactic functions in Indonesian. The first pattern has to do with derivative affixes that change the categories of words consistently. (Angraini et al., 2024) explains that each language has a List of Morphemes, Rules of Word Formation, and Filters that determine which potential words can fit into the lexicon of actual words. The pen- prefix systematically transforms the verb into an actor noun or tool, such as "writer" and "beater", which always serves as an argument in a sentence. The confit of a with a specific root word results in abstract nouns such as "beauty" that tend to occupy the position of the subject or object in the sentence structure.

The second pattern is related to the relationship between reduplication and plural meanings or repetitions. Full reduplication of nouns such as "books" results in plural meanings that have certain syntactic limitations, i.e. they cannot join specific number words. (Situmeang et al., 2025) affirms that complex word forms form sentence structures and contribute significantly to the richness of grammatical units, demonstrating the important role of morphology in the syntactic architecture of language. In verbs, reduplication such as "read-read" results in the meaning of repetition or undirected activity, which affects the time aspect of the sentence. This pattern suggests that reduplication is not just the repetition of forms, but has a grammatical function that affects the overall structure of the sentence.

The third pattern concerns compound words and their syntactic behavior as a whole. Compound words such as "train" or "parent" cannot be separated by any other word and serve as a single unit in a sentence. (Budiman, 2025) Finding new patterns in reduplication and the tendency to form compound words that are increasingly complex with the needs of modern communication. These compound words behave like single words in syntactic transformations, they can be moved or replaced as a whole. This pattern is important to understand that not all two-word sequences are phrases, but they can be compound words with different syntactic properties.

The fourth pattern concerns the relationship between the type of suffix and the structure of the verb argument. The prefix men- consistently marks transitive verbs that require objects, such as "read" that requires the object "book". Language systems with their structural levels can be understood through syntagmatic and paradigmatic

relationships that provide a framework for understanding the relationship between morphology and syntax. The suffix -Kan adds a benefactive meaning so that the verb requires a beneficiary argument, such as "read" which can be accompanied by "to sister". The suffix -I signifies a locative meaning with the implication of location in its structure, such as "inhabit" or "occupied". These patterns show the regularity of the morphosyntax system that makes it easier for learners to predict the syntactic function of derivative words.

The fifth pattern has to do with nominalization that turns clauses into complex noun phrases. (David Darwin, 2021) It shows that the understanding of morphosyntax is still limited even among linguistics students, so more interactive and real-example-based learning is needed. Nominalization with the confit of pen-an retains the relationship of its original meaning and grammar even though it changes its function. For example, "construction of a building by a contractor" still has a structure with "building" as the object and "contractor" as the perpetrator, but the whole functions as a noun. This pattern reflects the complexity of the Indonesian system that allows for a layered structure with multiple functions in a single sentence construction.

### **Pedagogical Implications of Morphosyntactic Relationships in Indonesian Language Learning**

Understanding the morphosyntactic relationship has an important impact on how Indonesian is taught. Traditional approaches that separate morphology and syntax teaching tend to make students not understand the relationship between these two aspects in everyday language use. Understanding of morphosyntax is still limited even among linguistics

students, so a more interactive and concrete example-based learning method is needed. Learning that integrates morphology and syntax helps students understand that word formation does not stand alone, but is closely related to the way the word is used in sentences.

Task-based learning strategies can improve students' understanding of morphosyntax. (Angraini et al., 2024) It shows that the close relationship between syntactic structure and meaning in communication requires a good understanding of both aspects to improve overall language skills. Tasks such as changing an active sentence to a passive while paying attention to a change in suffix, or transforming a verb into a noun and adjusting its sentence structure, can build awareness of morphosyntactic relationships. Writing activities with certain limitations, for example having to use nominalization or compound words, encourage students to apply morphosyntactic knowledge creatively.

The assessment of morphosyntactic competency must measure applicability ability, not just memorization knowledge. Language systems with their structural levels require a holistic approach to learning that reflects the interconnectedness between linguistic levels. An assessment instrument can be the task of analyzing and correcting morphosyntactic errors in texts, explaining why a construction is wrong from a morphological and syntactic point of view, or writing a text with certain morphosyntactic criteria. Assessments like this are more reflective of the ability to use language in a real context than a multiple-choice test of grammar rules.

The curriculum needs to be restructured to reflect morphological and syntactic interconnectedness. The

importance of a deep understanding of syntax and semantics so that learners can be more careful in composing sentences and choosing the right words. The material on suffixes should be directly related to their syntactic functions, for example teaching the confit of the sentence while showing how this nominalization changes the structure of the sentence. The use of authentic examples from real texts helps students see the application of morphosyntactic patterns in the context of actual communication.

Technology can support morphosyntactic learning in a more personalized and interactive way. (Scott, 2024) argues that computational methods are effective in identifying morphological patterns and complementing traditional linguistic analysis with data-driven approaches. Digital platforms can provide adaptive exercises that adapt the level of difficulty to the student's abilities, accompanied by feedback that explains the morphosyntactic relationships in detail. Visualizing sentence structure that shows how words with different suffixes occupy different positions can help students understand these abstract concepts. The professional development of teachers is also important to ensure they have a deep understanding of morphosyntax and strategies for teaching it effectively to students.

### **Morphosyntactic Errors in Learning and Strategies for Handling Them**

Error analysis in Indonesian learning revealed systematic patterns related to morphosyntactic relationships. The most common mistake is the use of improper suffixes resulting in a category of words that do not match their syntactic functions. (Situmeang et al., 2025) Identify that language errors still occur frequently both verbally and in writing,

including incorrect sentence structure, unclear meanings, and the use of words that are not in context. For example, students often write sentences such as "Reading the book is very interesting" which should have changed "Reading that book" to "Reading that" or "Reading that book" to fit the function of the subject that requires the noun.

Another error that often arises is interference from regional languages that have different morphological systems. Factors that cause language errors include lack of understanding of sentence structure, the influence of regional languages, and the habit of using non-standard language on social media. Students with a Javanese language background, for example, often have difficulties with the Indonesian suffix system due to differences in rules. Overgeneralization errors also occur when students apply productive rules to inappropriate contexts. (Situmeang et al., 2025) explains that not all theoretically formable words will be accepted in real use because they experience competition with other words or are rarely used.

An error handling strategy should start with an in-depth analysis of the source of the error. (Situmeang et al., 2025) emphasizes that a better understanding of morphological and syntactic relationships allows for more in-depth analysis and more effective remedies. The teacher needs to not only point out the correct form, but explain why the wrong form is not grammatical from a morphosyntactic perspective. Effective feedback should link morphological errors to their syntactic consequences, accompanied by examples of correct usage in various sentence contexts.

Explicit learning about morphosyntactic relationships can prevent errors. Communication tools

with roles are very important, so understanding the structure of language is fundamental for effective communication. Teaching that integrates morphology and syntax equips students with an understanding that helps them predict the syntactic behavior of words and the results of morphological processes. Practice identifying and correcting morphosyntactic errors in text can develop students' ability to monitor their own language production.

A contrastive approach is useful for overcoming interference from regional languages. By explaining the systematic differences between the Indonesian morphosyntax system and the students' regional languages, teachers can anticipate areas of difficulty and design targeted learning. Indonesia relies on affixation as the main way of forming complex words, with a different system from many regional languages. Gradual learning that starts from simple to complex patterns facilitates more effective acquisition.

Collaborative learning and technology can also support the improvement of morphosyntactic competence. (David Darwin, 2021) Identify that affixing is the most productive process that requires deep understanding and ongoing practice. Group activities where students give each other feedback on friends' writings with a focus on morphosyntactic aspects create a supportive learning environment. Digital platforms can provide personalized and intensive training according to the individual needs of students, with systems that can identify specific patterns of errors and provide targeted exercises to address those weaknesses. The combination of these strategies is expected to significantly improve students' morphosyntactic competence.

## CONCLUSION

This research reveals that the relationship of morphology and syntax in the Indonesian language forms a complex and systematic integrated system. Morphological processes through affixation, reduplication, and composition have been shown to have a significant impact on the function and syntactic distribution of linguistic elements in sentence construction. The morphosyntactic patterns identified show high predictability in the correspondence between morphological forms and the role of syntax, proving the regularity of the Indonesian linguistic system. The application of generative theoretical frameworks, X-bar theory, and word-based approaches provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding morphosyntactic interactions in depth. The pedagogical implications of this study confirm the urgency of integrative learning that links the study of morphology with syntax to develop students' linguistic competence holistically. Identifying morphosyntax error patterns and handling strategies makes a practical contribution to improving the quality of Indonesian language learning. Further research is suggested to explore the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic dimensions of morphosyntactic and develop more adaptive and contextual technology-based learning models.

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