

THE ENGLISH INFLECTIONAL SUFFIXES AND DERIVATIONAL AFFIXES IN ELT

Siyaswati

Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya

siyaswati@unipasby.ac.id

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the meaning of inflectional suffixes and derivational affixes. When we talk about inflection and derivation, it's also talks about suffixes and prefixes. This topic is important to be discussed because we often find the learners of English make a mistake when they make sentences buy using verbs form or plural forms. Besides they also often make mistakes when they want to form a new word from nouns to adjectives, adjectives to nouns, adjectives to verbs, adjectives to adverbs, etc. Adding a suffix in to a word is not easy because one has to know the rules. The rule of adding the suffix or affix has the grammar of a language. The result of the study is the number of inflectional as not so many that of derivational affixes. Yet any particular inflectional suffixes will be used much more frequently than any particular derivational affixes. Inflectional morpheme 'plural' occurs far more often than does the derivational morpheme -ness. It can be concluded that in English all the inflectional affixes are suffixes, but the set of the derivational affixes includes both prefixes and suffixes.

Key words: The English Inflectional Suffixes, Derivational Affixes, ELT

A. Introduction

The topic is very important to be discussed because we often find the learners of English made mistake when they make sentences by using verb forms or plural nouns. Besides, they also make mistakes when they want to form new words from nouns to adjectives, adjectives to nouns, adjectives to verbs, adjectives to adverbs etc.

Talking about suffixes and prefixes is also talk about morphemes. Affix consist of prefix and suffix. Prefix is a morpheme or a bound morpheme attached to initial base word to form a new word, while suffix is a bound morpheme attached to final based word. A morpheme is a smallest unit in a language. It is

classified into free morpheme and bound morpheme. Free morpheme is a morpheme that can stand by itself, while bound morpheme is a morpheme that cannot stand by itself.

There are many subtopics to talk about but the writer limits the topic on the meaning of inflectional suffixes and derivational affixes, while morphemes (free morpheme and bound morpheme) are not discussed but they are sometimes mentioned in the discussion in this paper.

B. Inflection

Adding a suffix into a word is not easy because one has to know the rules. The role of adding the suffix has connection with grammar of language. This statement is said as the following quotation.

Inflection/inflexion (in Morphology) the process of adding an AFFIX to a word or changing it to some other way according to the rules of the grammar of a language. For example, in English, verbs are inflected for 3rd- person singular: *I work, he/she works*, and for past tense: *I worked*. Most nouns may be inflected for plural: horse-horses, flower-flowers, man-men. (Jack C. Richard, 1992:179)

After reading the quotation above, it can be known that inflection is the addition of affix on the final words. It seems on the addition of “-s” on the third singular person in present tense and “-ed” in past verb form. Besides, it can be looked at the form of plural noun by adding “-s” or changing the vowel of singular noun into plural noun.

To support the meaning of the inflection above, the writer needs to quote the meaning of inflection from the other linguist’s idea.

Inflection (inflexion) 1. The variation in form of a single lexical item as required by its various grammatical roles in particular sentences. Distinctions of inflection reflect the various grammatical categories which occur in a language and the distinction which are made within each. 2. A particular word form assumed by a lexical item in some grammatical environment. For example, *gave* and *given* are two inflections of the verb *give*. 3. A particular bound morph

expressing an inflectional distinction. For example, one can speak of the English plural suffix *-s* or the past tense suffix *-ed* as an inflection. (R.L. Trask, 1996:142)

The meaning of the first sentence in the quotation above is that a particular sentence needs variation of word form in accordance with the grammatical roles. For the example, the word “cry” can be used in a sentence “*The children cried last night*” and “*a child cries every night.*” Then the next sentence of the quotation talks about the different inflection that occurs in the word itself. For example, the word “cry” can be inflected to be “cried” and “cries.” The two inflected words are the various grammatical categories occurring in a word “cry.”

A certain word form is considered by a lexical item in some grammatical environment. For example, the form “calls” and “called” are two inflections of the verb “call.” Then bound morpheme or morphs is used to express an inflectional distinctions. For example a morpheme “-s” is a suffix used to show the English plural noun, “-ed” is a suffix of a past-tense. They are the inflectional form of English plural nouns and English past-tense. So, inflection is the variation of word forms in sentences in accordance with the grammatical roles and the past verb forms or suffixes attached to present or past verb form and plural nouns.

It is still necessary to give the meaning of inflection by the other writer talking about the inflectional affixes and the examples.

English noun plural formatives, of whatever morphological nature, produce words that cannot occur in certain positions or environments in sentences in which the singular (root or base form) can occur; *conversely* these plural forms can occur in positions and environments from which singular forms are excluded. Thus (the) *horses* may occur before *eat, sleep, are working, etc.* where (the) *horse*, and this later may appear before *eats, sleeps, is working, etc.* where the *horses* would not be found. These formations, therefore, and the category of number in English nouns (and likewise in that part of the English verb paradigms where it is formally marked) are inflectional. The very small number of unpaired noun forms in English that are only used as grammatical plural, such as *cattle* (the cattle are grazing) and for which no singular paradigm member is found, are not sufficient to affect the descriptive status of English noun plurals as a whole. (R.H. Robins, 1980: 193)

The singular form of words can occur in positions and environments. This means that a singular noun word can occupy the position in a sentence before a

verb and the verb must be added by a morpheme *-s*, while a noun plural word need not be added. Therefore, the formation of the words by adding the morpheme *-s* or suffix is called inflectional. Besides, there are some words that don't have plural forms or paired noun forms, they are only used as grammatical plural nouns. In addition, a verb is added a morpheme *-s* when it is used as a simple present tense sentence for a third singular pronoun or noun.

From the quotation and explanation above, it can be said that inflection is the process of adding suffix to a word or changing it in some other way according to the rules of the grammar. It can also be said that inflection is the variation in form of a single lexical noun as required by its various grammatical roles in particular sentences; the formation and the category of number in English nouns and English verb paradigms are inflectional. It is important to make the meaning of inflection clearer by giving some examples, as the following words by (Sabrony, 1989: 31)

1. Plural forms, such as:
 - s book -books
 - Glass -glasses
 - en ox -oxen
 - Child -children
 - Fish -fish

2. Possessions, such as: *John's* book
 John and *Mary's* house
 A dog's tail

3. Third singular verb marker, such as:
 - Mother always *cooks* rice
 - Jack *goes* to school
 - He never *watches* TV

4. Tense markers, such as: He *worked* hard yesterday. (past tense)
 I have *repeated* the lesson. (past participle)
 We are *studying* English. (present progressive)

5. Pronouns have different forms in terms of function:
 - As a subject : *She* is a teacher
 - As an object : I met *her* yesterday
 - As possessive : is this *hers*? Yes, it's *her* bag.

b. Derivation

After talking about the meanings of inflection, the next discussion is about the meanings of derivation. In the following paragraphs, the writer discusses the meanings of derivation based on the references and knowledge. Besides, it is also given some examples to make the meanings of derivation clearer. The meanings of derivation intended are as the following quotations:

Derivation (in MORPHOLOGY and WORD FORMATION) the formation of the new words by adding affixes to other words or morphemes. For example, the *insanity* is derived from adjective *sane* by the addition of the negative prefix *in-* and the noun forming suffix *-ity*. (Jack C. Richards: 1992:103)

In morphology, the word derivation means the formation of new words by adding affixes (prefix or suffix) to other words or morphemes. It means that a prefix or suffix can be added to an adjective to make a noun and the process of the addition is derivation. The other example of derivation is the word *impossibility*. This word is derived from the adjective *possible* by addition of the negative prefix *in-* and the noun – forming suffix *-ity*.

It is very important to quote the other idea about derivation from the other writer. This quotation is intended to support the idea of derivation in the previous paragraph. The quotation intended is as the following lines.

Derivation – in word formation, the process of obtaining new words by adding affixes to existing words or stems, as illustrated by the formation of *happiness* and *unhappy* from *happy* or *rewrite* and *writer* from *write*. Along with compounding, derivation is one of two principal means of word formation in English most other languages. (R.L. Trask, 1996:78)

This quotation says that derivation is the formation of a word by adding prefix or suffix to existing word or stem. Besides, derivation can be formed by compounding free and free morpheme. For example, the word *able* “adjective” is compounded to the word *read* “verb” becomes *readable* meaning can be read. So, derivation is not only the addition of prefix or suffix to the existing word or stem but also compounding of free and free morpheme. To support this explanation, it

is necessary to cite the other idea from tyhe other writer. The following quotation talks about the process of forming new words known as derivation. “Derivation is the process of forming new words according to a (fairly) regular pattern on the basis of pre-existing words.” (Hurford and Heasley, 1983: 106). This lines say that derivation is the process how to form new words in accordance with the regular pattern. Then the regular pattern of forming the new words is that when a certain part of speech – e.g. *verb* is changed into the part of speech *noun*, it can be added a morpheme *-ing* like the word *meet* becomes *meeting*. The next discussion talks about the process of derivation as the continuation of the discussion above.

We start to analyze the process of derivation in more detail by nothing that a step in derivation is usually actually not one process, but three simultaneous processes namely:

- a. a morphological process (e.g. changing the shape of a word by adding a prefix or suffix).
- b. a syntactic process (changing the part of speech of a word, e.g. from verb to noun).
- c. a semantic process (producing a new sense)

	Morphological process	Syntactic process	Semantic process
Laugh: laughter	Add. Suffix –ter	Change verb to noun	Produce word denoting an act or an activity
Teach: teacher	Add. Suffix –er	Change verb to noun	Produce word denoting an agent
Red: redness	Add. Suffix –ness	Change adjective to noun	Produce word denoting property

The word *laugh* as a verb is added a bound morpheme *-ter* becomes *laughter* as a noun showing the changes from the base to derivational word and produces different meaning. The word *teach* as a verb is added a bound morpheme *-er* becomes *teacher* as an agent noun showing the change from base word to derivational word and produces different part of speech. The word *red* as

an adjective is added suffix *-ness* becomes *redness* as a noun showing the change from base word to derivational word. The addition of suffix *-ter*, *-er*, *-ness*, the changes from the verb to noun, adjective to noun, and the production of different meaning are called the process of derivation.

Morphological process of affixation often makes the learners of English language confused because the addition of prefix or suffix doesn't always change to the other part of speech, or it is called zero-change. This statement is proved by looking at the following quotation.

We give now some examples of derivation involving no morphological process at all, or 'zero-derivation', as it sometimes called.

For example *cook* (agent noun) is derived from *cook* (transitive verb) just as *painter* (agent noun) is derived from *paint* (transitive verb). We just happen not to have a word *cooker*, meaning a person who cooks, in English. *Cook* (noun) is an example of zero derivation. (Hurford and Heasley, 1983: 207)

From the example of the zero-derivation above, it can be given the other examples. The word *work* (noun) is derived from *work* (intransitive verb), as used in the sentences *The secretary has to finish her work quickly*, and *the people work hard everyday*. The words *work* in the first sentence is a noun, while in the second is a verb. Though the two words have the same forms, they have different parts of speech. More examples are needed to make the meaning of derivation clearer. The following are the examples intended:

1. *Noun Prefix*

- a. ante- meaning 'before': anteroom, antehall
- b. anti- meaning 'against': antichrist, antipope, anti-Darwinism
- c. ex- meaning 'former': ex-chancellor, ex-wife, ex-president
- d. inter- meaning 'among, between': intermarriage, internation, interlink
- e. re- meaning 'again': rebirth, reincarnation

2. *Verb Prefixes*

- a. dis- meaning 'negative': to disagree, to disbelieve, to disobey
- b. mal- meaning 'badly': to maltreat, to malpractise
- c. mis- meaning 'wrongly': to mismanage, to misread
- d. re- meaning 'again' : to rebuild, to reconsider
- e. un- meaning 'negative' to undress, to unload

3. *Adjective Prefixes*

- a. bi- meaning 'having two ...' bisexual, bilingual
- b. dis- meaning 'negative': disobedient, disreputable

- c. extra- meaning 'outside': extra-tropical, extraordinary
- d. semi- meaning 'half': semi-official, semi-centennial
- e. un- meaning 'negative' : unhappy, unkind

4. Noun Suffixes

- a. -ee denoting 'the person affected by the action': addressee, employee
- b. -er forming 'an agent noun' : baker, hunter
- c. -ess denoting 'a female person' : hostess, stewardess
- d. -ist denoting 'a player or writer': pianist, novelist
- e. -ful expressing 'a collective noun' : handful, spoonful

5. Adjective Suffixes

- a. -able meaning 'that can be -ed': eatable, readable
- b. -al meaning 'of the nature of' : brutal, cultural
- c. -an changing geographical names into adjectives : Indonesian, Australian
- d. -en meaning 'resembling': golden, wooden

6. Verb Suffixes

- a. -en forming verbs from adjectives : to darken, to deepen
- b. -fy meaning 'to make': to certify, signify

7. Adverb Suffixes

- a. -ly forming 'adverb of manner' : greatly, widely
- b. -wise or -ways forming 'adverb from nouns' : lengthways, lengthwise, sideways, sidewise

(Soekemi, 1995: 26-31)

C. Differences between Inflection and Derivation

Having finished talking the meanings and giving examples of inflection and derivation, it is quite important to show the differences between them. The following quotation talks about the differences:

Suffixes are either derivational or inflectional. Derivational suffixes may be final, while inflectional suffixes are always final. Derivational suffixes may change the part of speech of stems, while inflectional suffixes never change the parts of speech of the stems. (Soekemi, 1955:33)

In order to make differences between derivational affixes and inflectional suffixes clearer it is important to draw a diagram below where where 'DA' stands for Derivational Affixes and 'IA' for Inflectional Affixes.

DA	Root (Base)	DA	DA	IA	New words
in	act	ive	ly		inactively
	fertile	ize		s	fertilizes
	fertile	ize		ed	fertilized
	fertile	ize	er	s	fertilizers
	organ	ize		s	organizes
	organ	ize		ed	organized
	organ	ize	tion	s	organization
il	legal	ly			illegally

(Rachmadie, 1989:32)

The number of inflectional suffixes is not so many as that of derivational affixes. Yet any particular inflectional suffixes will be used more frequently than any particular derivational affixes. We will find that the inflectional morpheme ‘plural’ occurs far more often than does the derivational morpheme. –ness. Finally, it can be concluded that in English all the inflectional affixes are suffixes, but the set of the derivational affixes include both prefixes and suffixes.

References

- Hurford, James R. And Heasley, Brendan 1983. *Semantic: a Coursebook*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Rachmadie, Sabrony. 1989. *Derivational and Inflectional Affixes – Vocabulary*. Suranaya: IKIP Surabaya Press.
- Richards, Jack C., Platt. John, Platt Heidi. 1992. *Longman Dictionary of Language teaching and Applied Linguistics*. England: Longman.
- Robin, R.H. 1980. *General Linguistics – An Introductory Survey*: London: Longman.
- Soekemi, 1985. *Linguistics : A Work Book*. Surabaya IKIP Surabaya Press.
- Trask, R.L. 1996. *A Dictionary of Grammatical Terms in Linguistics*. London: T.J. Press (Patstow)Ltd.