

## Morphological Awareness of The Fourth Semester Students of English Department

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### Abstract

*Morphological awareness that greatly influences in language learning means an individual's ability to recognize the internal structure of words. English Department students should have better morphological awareness than non-English Department students because as an English teacher to-be, hopefully they can hone their future students' morphological awareness to help them learning English. This research aims to determine the morphological awareness of the fourth semester students of English Department. This is a descriptive qualitative research observing the English Department students' morphological awareness. The population of this research is the fourth semester students of English Department 2022/2023 academic year. The data used is the score of Morpheme Identification Awareness Test (MIAT) and Morpheme Structure Awareness Test (MSAT). The data are gained by having Morphological Awareness Test consisting of MIAT and MSAT. Therefore, the instrument used is a test. The results of the test are analyzed to find the classification of morphological awareness. Having analyzed the data, the writers found that the average of morpheme identification awareness test of the students is 66 (Sufficient) and that of morpheme structure awareness test is 85 (Good). Therefore, the writers concluded that the morphological awareness of the fourth semester students of English Department belongs to Good (74.5).*

**Keywords:** Morphology; Morpheme, Morphological Awareness, Morpheme Identification Awareness Test, Morpheme Structure Awareness Test

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that plays a very important role in learning English. Morphology is the mental system involved in word formation or the branch of linguistics that deals with words, their internal structure, and how they are formed (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). Mastery of extensive morphological knowledge will not only enrich information on word formation but also indirectly help language skills mastery become better and more meaningful in communicating both orally and in writing (Anita; Ramadhiyanti; Kurniawati, 2014). So far, people only recognize English learning that related to language skills mastery and grammar without realizing the importance of linguistic abilities.

Many teachers are not yet fully aware of the importance of linguistic abilities or linguistic awareness of the students in studying English. On the other hand, linguistic ability greatly affects the development of students' language skills (Anita; Ramadhiyanti; Kurniawati, 2014). Sometimes even the university students majoring in English do not really care about the Morphology course. Studying morphology is not as important as studying

grammar and other language skills. The English Department students are prepared to teach English in high school, meanwhile there is no topic related to Morphology taught in high school. As a result English Department students feel lazy to learn Morphology. This is what one of the writers feels when teaching Morphology.

Knowledge of the morphology of a certain language, such as English morphology, is also crucial for the students of English Department in using English. Goodwin et.al state that certain textbooks and topics are more demanding of academic language for students today, so morphological awareness is very important for high school students (Aziz, Daud, & Ismar, 2019). It means that student' morphological awareness needs to be sharpened and English teachers have an important role in these issues.

Studying morphology for English Department students certainly has an impact on their morphological awareness. Morphological awareness refers to an individual's ability to decode the morphemic structure of words and analyze them further (Oz, 2014). It means that morphological awareness belongs to individuals as language speakers. Kuo and Anderson in (Utami & Mujadidah, 2021) say Morphological awareness is the ability to use knowledge about the rules of word formation and the pairing between sound and meaning. Kirby and Bower state that morphological awareness arises in individuals in three ways: recognizing, understanding, and manipulating small units of meaning (Kirby et al., 2012). A language speaker indirectly has the three things that are meant by Kirby when he or she encounters a small unit (word) in his language. For example, English speakers will really understand that rearrangement is formed from re- + arrange + -ment, as well as those learning English. Meanwhile, Ebbers argues that morphological awareness appears in the understanding that prefixes and suffixes can be added or removed to change the meaning of a word (Zeh, 2017).

Developing awareness of English morphology will enable an individual (language learner) to understand several things related to the existence of words in a language such as internal structure of words as well as word formation. Morphological awareness equips students with two abilities: analytical aspects (awareness of morpheme identification) and synthetic aspects (awareness of morphological structures). Morpheme identification awareness is the ability to distinguish different meanings and break down complex words into smaller meanings. Meanwhile, awareness of morphological structure is the ability to generate new meanings and rearrange smaller meanings to form new words on the other hand (McBride-Chang et al., 2008).

Morphological awareness plays a significant role in learning English, not only to the ability of recognizing the internal structure, word formation and word meaning. In addition, morphological awareness apparently plays a role in language skills too such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, pronunciation and vocabulary. Awareness of inflectional morphology can develop

grammatical awareness meanwhile of derivational morphology plays an important role in increasing students' vocabulary knowledge (Oz, 2014). One method that ESL/EFL students can use to learn vocabulary and improve their lexical knowledge is through the use of morphological awareness (Wysocki & Jenkins, 1987 in (Ibrahim Rabadi, 2019). Bertram, Laine, and Virkkla still in (Ibrahim Rabadi, 2019) concludes that elementary school students in Finland who learn about affixes have more developed vocabulary and have ability to recognize the meaning of words. Rabadi in his research concludes that there is a positive correlation between the amount of vocabulary and the morphological awareness of language learners (Ibrahim Rabadi, 2019).

Studies conducted on reading and morphological awareness reveal that in many cases students with the ability to break words into meaningful parts also have a better understanding of reading and writing (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). In addition Safraz et.al mention that morphological awareness is effective and is able to improve the students' writing skill by exploring the students to use prefixes and suffixes meaningfully in writing paragraphs (Summaira Safraz, Umbeen Tariq, 2018). Awareness of derivational morphemes allows students to understand the meaning of words so that it leads better understanding on words and texts (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012). Meanwhile, Karami writes that there is a relationship between morphological awareness and listening ability.

As language learners, English Department students who study English Morphology should have better morphological awareness than students who do not. Morphological awareness can be a useful approach for EFL students in learning English. In addition, English Department students should also understand how to develop students' morphological awareness when they have to teach English in school (Nyayu Muharomah Arviyolla, Delfi, & Dahnilsyah, 2022).

Seeing the importance of morphological awareness, the researcher is interested in investigating the level of morphological awareness. By having good morphological awareness, students are expected to find it easier to determine the meaning of words and be able to understand the analysis and synthesis processes in forming English words. It is then expected to help students communicate meaningfully (Anita; Ramadhiyanti; Kurniawati, 2014).

Many researchers have discussed English morphological awareness which then the writers classify into 5 groups. First is research on morphological awareness and vocabulary , such as (a) Relationship between Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Mastery (2018) by Adam (b) Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Knowledge among English Language Learners Reem (2019) by Ibrahim Rabadi (c) Impact of Morphological Awareness on Vocabulary Knowledge of Libyan EFL Students by Zamzam Amhimmid Mare, (d) The Correlation between Morphological Awareness and Vocabulary Mastery of The Fifth Semester Students of the English Department of FKIP, Riau University (2022) by Nyanyu Muharomah et al. Their studies point out to

the same conclusion, that there is a positive and significant correlation between students' vocabulary mastery and morphological awareness in English language learners.

Second is research on morphological awareness with reading comprehension such as (a) Morphological Awareness and Its Association with Reading Comprehension of EFL Saudi University Students (2017) by Ahmed F Shoeibi, (b) The impact of morphological instruction on morphological awareness and reading comprehension of EFL learners (2018) by Forough Amirjalili and Ali Akbar Jabbari. Both studies report that there is a positive correlation and potential relationship between learners' morphological awareness and reading comprehension. Meanwhile, Xiuli Tong in Morphological awareness: A key to understanding poor reading comprehension in English finds that poor morphological awareness contributes to reading comprehension difficulties, and that children with different reading comprehension profiles can study morphology at different levels.

Third is research on morphological awareness with vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension such as (a) The Relation of Morphological Awareness and Syntactic Awareness to Adults' Reading Comprehension: Is Vocabulary Knowledge a Mediating Variable? carried out by Ying Guo et al, (b) Morphological Awareness Instruction for ESL Students' Vocabulary Development and Reading Comprehension (2012) carried out by Aletheia Ajeng Priskinanda et al. Both studies agree that vocabulary understanding plays an important role in reading comprehension, but beyond that it turns out that morphological awareness and syntactic awareness have a very significant role in language learners' mastery of both vocabulary and reading comprehension.

Fourth is a research related to the relationship between morphological awareness and writing ability, as conducted by Summaira Sarfraz et al in Effectiveness of Morphological Awareness in English Writing Composition of Pakistani Students at the Undergraduate Level-Case Study. This study finds that morphological awareness is effective to improve the students' writing.

Fifth is research on general morphological awareness, especially those related to the internal structure, word formation and meaning of a word, as carried out by Henny Septia Utami and Mutiara Mujadidah (2021) in An Analysis of English Education Students' Morphological Awareness: Identification and Structure Awareness. This research aims to describe the ability of English Department students in morpheme identification, internal structure awareness and overall morphological awareness. This research was applied to the sixth semester students of English department who have taken the Morphology course.

In line with the latest previous research, the writers want to know the morphological awareness of English Department students in the fourth Semester. The selection of fourth semester students is based on the reason that fourth semester students have not got the Morphology course yet. It makes this

research different from the previous research. The research uses Morphological Awareness Test (MAT) which consists (1) Morpheme Identification Awareness Test (MIAT), a test to measure students' ability to analyze and break down complex words into smaller units such as arrangement = arrange + -ment, (2) Morpheme Structure Awareness Test (MSAT), a test to measure students' morphological abilities in synthesizing morphemes to produce new words such as writes become writes, writing, writer, and rewrite.

The aim of this research is to determine morphological awareness the fourth semester students of the English Department of Veteran Bangun Nusantara University. Hopefully the result of the research can contribute ideas related to the implementation of English language learning in the English Department.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a qualitative descriptive study in which the writers observe morphological awareness of the fourth semester students of English Department of Veteran Bangun Nusantara University, especially for the 2022/2023 academic year. The population of this research is the fourth semester students of English Department. There are 21 students in the fourth semester. However, there are 15 participating in the data collection process. The data in this study are the scores of the morphological awareness test. Data collection is carried out by having tests that consists of a Morphological Awareness Test. The test includes Morpheme Identification Awareness Test (MIAT) and Morpheme Structure Awareness Test (MSAT). The test results then are analyzed quantitatively to find the average. To determine the level of students' morphological awareness, the writers use assessment scales often used in language research from Nurgiyantoro in (Utami & Mujadidah, 2021). The grouping of these levels can be seen in the following table;

Table 2.1. Assessment Scale

No	Percentage	Classification
1	90%-100%	Very good
2	75%-89%	Good
3	60%-74%	Sufficient
4	40%-59%	Less
5	0%-40%	Very less

## 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The data in this study consists of the results of the morphological awareness test of students in the fourth semester. There are two types of tests namely MIAT (Morpheme Identification Awareness Test) and the MSAT



(Morpheme Structure Awareness Test). There are 15 students taking part on the test. The following is a table of the values in question;

Tabel 3.1 Classification of Morphological Awareness

No	Participants	MIAT Score	MSAT Score	Total Score	Percentage	Average	Classification
1	001	80	100	180	90%	90	Very good
2	002	32	80	112	56%	56	Less
3	003	60	70	130	65%	65	Sufficient
4	004	42	80	122	61%	61	Sufficient
5	005	82	90	172	86%	86	Good
6	006	72	70	142	71%	71	Sufficient
7	007	78	100	178	89%	89	Good
8	008	86	90	176	88%	88	Good
9	009	76	70	146	73%	73	Sufficient
10	010	82	80	162	81%	81	Good
11	011	88	90	178	89%	89	Good
12	012	66	90	156	78%	78	Good
13	013	54	90	144	72%	72	Sufficient
14	014	54	90	144	72%	72	Sufficient
15	015	40	80	120	60%	60	Sufficient
		992/15 = 66,1	1270/15 =84,6		75,4%	1131/15 = 75,4	Good

From table above it can be seen that the average of MIAT awareness test score is: 66.1% (sufficient) while the MSAT average score is: 84,6% (good). There is only one student with very good morphological awareness, 6 students with good morphological awareness, 7 students in the sufficient category, and 1 student in the poor category. The morphological awareness of students in the fourth semester of the English Department is 75.4 classified as Good.

### Morpheme Identification Awareness Test

This study, the average score for the morpheme identification awareness test is 66.1% and is categorized as sufficient. There are 5 questions in the morpheme identification awareness test.

### Identifying Suffixes

The first question is identifying suffix in English. There are 5 question of identifying suffix. Students have to determine the suffix that appears in each word displayed. All students can answer this question easily, although not all students can answer all the questions correctly. The following table is the results of the question analysis;

Tabel 3.2 Identifying Suffixes

No	Correct Answers	Students
1	5	1
2	4	8
3	3	4
4	2	1
5	1	1
6	0	0

Based on the table, all students are able to answer the first question, although not all students are able to answer all questions correctly. There is only 1 student who can answer 5 questions with correct answers. Furthermore, there are 8 students who can answer 4 questions correctly. In addition, 4 students are able to answer 3 questions correctly. Next, there is 1 student who answers 2 questions correctly. Meanwhile, there is only 1 student who answers 1 question correctly in the first question. The most common error occurs in question number 5 in which they have to identify suffix in the word **truth**. Only 1 student can answer the question correctly. Most of them wrote that truth has no suffix because they think that truth is a free morpheme.

### Identifying Prefixes

The second question is identifying prefix. The students have to find the prefix. The students also do not encounter difficulties in this part. Almost all students are able to answer the questions correctly. However, there are still wrong answers made by the students. The most common error that occurs in this question is determining the prefix in the word **reward**. Many students answer that **re-** is the prefix attached to the word **reward**. Here is the table of the results of the question analysis;

Tabel 3.3 Identifying Prefixes

No	Correct Answers	Students
1	5	5
2	4	7
3	3	1
4	2	2
5	1	0
6	0	0

From the table, all students are able to answer the second question, however, not all students are able to answer all questions correctly. There are 5 students who can answer 5 questions with no mistakes. Furthermore, there were 7 students who can answer 4 questions correctly. Next, 1 student can answer 3 questions correctly. Next there were 2 students who answered 2 questions correctly.

### Identifying Root and Part of Speech

The third question is identifying the root then determining the part of speech of the root. It seems that students are starting to find problems in the third question, especially those related to determining parts of speech. Meanwhile, students still find difficulties in determining the root. This can be seen in the following table;

Tabel 3.4 Identifying Root and Parts of Speech

No	Peserta	Root identificaton	Part of Speech Identification
1	001	5	1
2	002	-	-
3	003	2	2
4	004	2	2
5	005	5	4
6	006	5	1
7	007	5	2
8	008	5	5
9	009	3	1
10	010	4	4
11	011	4	4
12	012	4	-
13	013	-	3
14	014	-	2
15	015	1	2
		60%	43%

From this table it appears that 60% of students can identify the root of a word. Meanwhile, only 43% of students can identify the part of speech.

Furthermore, the writers discuss the results of the analysis of students' answers related to root identification. Here is the table for the root identification;

Tabel 3.5 Identifying Root

No	Correct Answer	Students
1	5	5 (33,33%)
2	4	3 (20%)
3	3	1 (6,66%)
4	2	2 (13,33%)
5	1	1 (6,66%)
6	0	3 (20%)

From the table above, it can be seen that there are 5 students (33.33%) who answer 5 questions related to root identification correctly. Furthermore, there are 3 students (20%) who can answer 4 questions about root correctly.



Next, there is 1 student (6.66%) with 3 correct answers on roots. Meanwhile there were 2 students (13.33%) who answer 2 questions related to root identification correctly. Meanwhile, there is 1 student (6.66%) who answers 1 question about word roots correctly. In fact, there were 3 students (20%) who cannot answer questions about root at all. In this regard, the three students seem not to be careful in reading the question instructions. They do not know that they have to look for the root of the word. They only answer the instruction related to determining the part of speech.

Still in the third question, the students are then asked to identify the part of speech of the root that was previously obtained. From table 4, only 43% of students are able to identify the part of speech of the root. The following is an analysis table of the number of answers related to part of speech;

Tabel 3.6 Identifying Parts of Speech

No	Correct Answers	Students
1	5	1 (6,66%)
2	4	3 (20%)
3	3	1 (6,66%)
4	2	5 (33,33%)
5	1	3 (20%)
6	0	2 (13,33%)

Based on the table, it can be seen that there was 1 student (6.66%) who answer 5 questions related to the part of speech of the root correctly. Furthermore, there are 3 students (20%) who can answer 4 questions regarding part of speech of the root correctly. Next, there is 1 student (6.66%) with 3 correct answers to questions regarding part of speech. Meanwhile there are 5 students (33.33%) who answer 2 questions related to part of speech at the root correctly. Meanwhile there were 3 students (20%) who answer 3 questions about part of speech at the root correctly. Furthermore, there were 3 students (20%) who can answer 1 question correctly related to the part of speech of the root. Finally, there are 2 students who are completely unable to answer correctly regarding part of speech.

From re-checking the results of the work belong to the two students, it seems that there is a misunderstanding among the students in understanding the question instructions. The two students thought that what they had to identify was the part speech of the word in the question item, for example **Powerful** was classified as an Adjective. Powerful belongs to an adjective, however, the answer is incorrect because the answer does not match the instructions. The student should classify the part of speech of the root of **powerful**, namely Power, as a Noun.

### Classifying Morpheme

The fourth question concerns with the classifying of morphemes as free morphemes and bound morphemes. There are 5 words belong to free morphemes and bound morphemes. Students must determine which free morphemes and bound morphemes are contained in those 5 words. The students still experience confusion in determining the type of morpheme (free or bound morpheme). There is no student who answers 5 questions correctly when classifying the types of morphemes. There are even 2 students whose answers are all wrong for 5 questions. Here is the table of question analyzing:

Tabel 3.7 Identifying Morpheme

No	Correct answer	Students
1	5	0
2	4	1 (6,66%)
3	3	6 (40%)
4	2	1 (6,66%)
5	1	5 (33,3%)
6	0	2 (13,33%)

The table shows that there are no students who answer all 5 questions correctly. There is only 1 student (6.66%) who answers 4 questions related to morpheme types correctly. Furthermore, there are 6 students (40%) who can answer 3 questions dealing with types of morphemes correctly. Next, there is 1 student (6.66%) with 2 correct answers to questions regarding types of morphemes. Meanwhile, there were 5 students (33.33%) who answer 1 question related to morpheme types correctly.

Further analyzing on the wrong answers given by the students, the writers find several issues such as

- (1) There are students who are reversed in classifying the types of morphemes. For example, in the word **neighborhood**, the student classifies the word **neighbor** as a bound morpheme while **-hood** is classified as a free morpheme,
- (2) The writers find the students who do not seem to understand the instruction and examples in the questions. The student groups the words in the question into free and bound morphemes without separating them first. For example, students include the words **neighborhood**, **disagreement**, **explanation** as bound morphemes, while the words **proposal** and **grew** are classified as free morphemes. It turned out the students thought that **grew** and **proposal** are root (word having no prefix or suffix) so these words are classified into the free morpheme. Meanwhile, the words **neighborhood**, **disagreement**, and **explanation** clearly have a prefix (**dis-**) and a suffix (**-hood**, **-ment**, **-ation**) so that all three are classified as bound morphemes
- (3) Students' lack of accuracy in observing the words in the questions. For example, the word **disagreement** only consists of **dis-** as bound morpheme

and the word **agreement** as free morpheme. Whereas, the word agreement consists of **agree (free morpheme)** and **-ment (bound morpheme)**

### Internal Structure

The fifth question concerns with breaking down the words based on their internal structure. For example, the word unhappiness consists of **un-** + **happy** + **-ness**. Even though there have already been examples, it turns out that not all students can answer the questions correctly. The following are the results of the analysis related to question number 5;

Tabel 3.8 Internal Structure of Words

No	Correct Answers	Students
1	5	1 (6,66%)
2	4	10 (66,6%)
3	3	-
4	2	4 (2,66%)
5	1	-
6	0	-

The table shows that only 1 student (6.66%) is able to answer 5 questions correctly. Meanwhile, 10 students (66.6%) are able to answer 4 questions correctly and 4 students (2.66%) are able to answer 2 questions. Most students find difficulty in breaking down the word **resellers** into its internal elements (**re-** + **sell** + **-er** + **-s**). There are several variations in the students' answers such as; (1) **re-** + **sell** + **-ers**, (2) **re-** + **sellers**, (3) **re-** + **seller** + **-s**, (4) **reseller** + **-s**.

### Morphological Structure Awareness Test

In this section, the students are asked to produce new words from the instructions given. There are 10 questions related to the morpheme structure awareness test. The mean for the morpheme structure awareness test is 85 and is categorized as good.

The highest score for the morpheme structure awareness test is 100 (2 students), while the lowest score is 70 (3 students). The following is an analysis related to questions in the morpheme structure awareness test. The most errors appear in question number 4;

If an HRD interviewed Scully. Scully is an interviewee.

If a couch trained Inno. Inno is a ....

The answer to the question above should be Trainee, but there are 9 students who have the wrong answer. They answer with various answers such as athlete, training, trained, trainer.

The next most common mistake is question number 8, namely;

If calculate something wrongly is miscalculate.

If pronounce a word wrongly is .....

The answer to the question above should be mispronounce. 7 students answer incorrectly. They answer with mispronunciation.

The Morpheme Identification Test examines participants' awareness of root words and their ability to guess meaning using morphemes, while the Morphological Structure test evaluates their ability to build literal compounds, and inflected, and extended words (Nurhemida, 2007). Based on the two kinds of test of morphological awareness test held on the research, it can be seen that the students have better MSAT (86,4 classified as good) than MIAT (66,1 classified as sufficient). It indicates that the students accomplished better in the analytical section than in the synthesis one. This result is different from that of Utami et.al whose research found that the students' MIAT score is higher than their MSAT score even though both are classified as sufficient (Utami & Mujadidah, 2021). Nurhemida finds that 64,58% students prefer Morpheme Identification test to Morpheme Structure Test meanwhile 35.42% students prefer Morpheme Structure than Morpheme Identification. In addition, Nurhemida adds that roughly 39% of the students consider that Morphological Structure test is difficult (Nurhemida, 2007).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Morphological awareness is the ability to consciously manipulate the smallest units of meaning in language. Morphological awareness is one of many skills that helps students learn to read and write. Morphological awareness contributes to improve the students' performance by analyzing word structures. Awareness of morphology is certainly crucial for English Department students. With a good level of morphological awareness, students are expected to find it easy to determine the meaning of words and be able to understand the analysis and synthesis processes in forming English words. This is then expected to help students communicate meaningfully.

From research related to morphological awareness in students, it can be concluded that the level of morphological awareness of students in the fourth semester of the English Department includes in Good category with a score of 74.5. The morphological awareness in this study consists of awareness of morpheme identification classified as sufficient (66,1) and awareness of morpheme structure classified as good (84,6).

Having analyzed the students' answers to the morpheme identification awareness test, the writers can draw several conclusions. In the morpheme identification test, students have no difficulty in finding the prefix and suffix of a word. However the students find difficulty in several issues such as (1) in determining the part of speech of a root, (2) in determining the type of morpheme (free morpheme or bound morpheme), (3) in breaking down the

internal structure of words, especially for words that have more than one prefix and suffix and appear simultaneously such as resellers.

From the results of this research, especially those related to the difficulties encountered by students, it is hoped that this can be a consideration for lecturers who teach Morphology to pay more attention to this section. Perhaps, the lecturer can emphasize and focus on the topic in which they students find difficulty most.

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### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

There are three contributors within the article. GG is responsible for the formulation of research questions and writing manuscript of the published work. PIA is responsible for the development or design of methodology and conducting the research and investigation process. SA is responsible for acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to the publication.

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