

The Use of Inflectional Suffixes by Third Year English Undergraduates at the College of Education, University of Mosul

Adday Mahmood Adday⁽¹⁾

المخلص

يتناول هذا البحث الإضافات التصريفية باللغة الانكليزية وطريقة شرحها مع إعطاء وظيفة الأصل ومعناه في الكلمة. إن الهدف من هذا البحث هو تسليط الضوء على الإضافات التصريفية وشرح الأنواع المختلفة من الإضافات التصريفية التي تضاف إلى المقطع الأخير من الكلمة فقط. يقوم هذا البحث، إشارة إلى الإضافات الاشتقاقية التي تغير بدورها وظيفة المقطع ومعناه في الكلمة، بعمل اختبار لمستوى طلبة المرحلة الثالثة في كل نوع من هذه الأنواع التي تنهي الكلمة بإضافة نوع واحد فقط من هذه الأنواع الأساسية التسعة، بعد ذلك يُسلط الضوء على الإضافات التصريفية التي انخفضت نسبة إجابات طلبة المرحلة الثالثة فيها بشكل ملحوظ عن المستوى المطلوب لكي تُعطى الاقتراحات المناسبة لمستوى طلبة المرحلة الثالثة والحلول الملائمة للحيلولة من دون الوقوع بمثل تلك الأخطاء في المراحل القادمة مع الأخذ بنظر الاعتبار الطرق والخطوات التي قد تستخدمها الدول المتقدمة المستخدمة اللغة الانكليزية في حل تلك الأخطاء.

Abstract

This research deals with the inflectional suffixes in English with reference to the derivational suffixes that basically change the function and the meaning of the base in award. The aim of this research is to focus on the inflectional suffixes explaining the different types of these suffixes that are basically added to the final syllable of award only. A test was made for the standard of third year students of each type of these suffixes that end award by adding just one type of the basic nine inflectional suffixes. This research , after that, focuses on the inflectional suffixes in which the students of the third year have answers that are less than what is expected so as to handle and give the suitable suggestions for foreign learners of English in general, and for the students of the third year in particular, and solutions

Received: 22/06/2010
Accepted: 28/10/2010

(1) B.D. in English/ Nineveh General Education Directorate.

for the students in order not to commit the same errors in the future referring to the approaches and methods that are used by the countries that use English language in solving these errors.

Section One

1.1 Introduction

Inflection is the process of adding inflectional morphemes (smallest units of meaning) to a word which indicates grammatical information, Such as: (case, number, person, gender, or word class, mood, tense, or aspect). While derivation, on the other hand, is the process of adding derivational morpheme, which creates a new word from existing words, sometimes by simply changes grammatical category (for example, changing a noun to a verb or a verb to an adjective). In fact, the inflectional suffixes are required mostly, to make a sentence grammatically and transformational correct, but they add little meaning to a word.

This means that they never change a word from one grammatical class into another, but each grammatical class has its own special set of inflectional suffixes. These suffixes can, consequently, be useful in helping the students to determine whether the word a noun, a verb, or an adjectives.

1.2 The Problem:

Dealing with morphology, especially with inflectional suffixes and error analysis, some problems can arise. Dealing with the suffixes:

(---s, ----ed, -----ing, ----er, -----etc) some difficulties may encounter students. For example, how they can differentiate between these two types of suffixes like (-s sg ps , -er cp)and how to use the inflectional suffixes.

1.3 Aims of the Study:

- 1- The present study aims at describing the various uses of inflectional suffixes.
- 2- Explaining the derivational suffixes of the same form.
- 3- Investigation the distribution and percentages of errors committed by the students of the third stage, as they use the inflectional suffixes.

1.4 The Hypotheses:

This study tries to inquire the following hypotheses:

- 1- The morphological, syntactic, phonological structures of the word and sentence determining the types of certain inflectional suffixes.
- 2- The inflectional suffixes are limited in number, and they come at the end of the word, they do not change the class of a word.
- 3- Most of the students of the third year in the Department of English at the College of Education in Mosul University could not differentiate between some of the inflectional suffixes like: ---s, sg ps --- s , 3rd person singular – er comparative). While most of them, are familiar with the rest of the inflectional suffixes (--spl, --spl, --ps, -ing vb –d pt).

1.5 The Model Adopted

The following research adopts the model given by Stageberg, 1971: An Introductory English Grammar.



Section Two

Literary Review

2.1 Definition of inflectional suffixes:

Inflectional suffixes are defined as bound morphemes that occur after a base. (Stageberge, 1971: 73). Suffixes are divided into two subfields: the inflectional suffixes with which this research paper is concerns and the derivational ones, what concern us in this research is the inflectional suffixes and their own words and sentences. (Kelly, 1998: p.1) defines the inflectional suffixes as "suffixes that are required to make a sentence grammatically correct, but, they add little meaning to the word. He means that the inflectional suffixes do not change the part of speech, but add meanings to words^(*).

This speech is proved by many grammarians like: (Lyons, 1968: 195) who state that an "inflection is a change made in the form of the word to express its relation to another word in the sentence. It means that the inflectional suffixes never change a word from one grammatical class into another, but each grammatical class has its own special set of inflectional suffixes. In a similar way. Fromkin and Rodman (1987: 7) grammatical morphemes which never change the

(*) Wikipedia...etc. Wikipedia is an online encyclopedia, and the definition Can be found at" // [http www](http://www).

syntactic category of the word or the morpheme to which they are attached are always attached to complete words (They mean that inflectional suffixes are likely to complete the different meaning of words within the same part of speech. At last, definition for suffixes (inflectional suffixes) which states that inflectional suffixes are affixes which are placed after the stem of the word. Common examples are case endings, which indicate the grammatical case of nouns or adjectives and verb endings which form the conjunction of verbs". Fromkin

And Rodman (1987: 13) state that "inflectional suffixes as a bound, According to this definition, the inflectional suffixes are subdivided into noun class, verb class and adjective class of suffixes.

To sum up, the class of inflectional suffixes is much smaller and more fossilized in English than the class of derivational. It is such a finite group. On the other hand, derivational suffixes are not in their stable in their function and meaning.

The process of word formation is never ending in any living language. Word – formation can be achieved through combining two or more words, through Zero- derivation, or through the addition of suffix.

Lastly, a test should be made to identify the inflectional suffixes and the derivational ones. These suffixes are characterized by the following features:

Table 1: The features of inflectional suffixes:

No.	The features of inflectional suffixes	Examples
1-	Do not change the part of speech	Cold – colder (both adjectives)
2-	Come last in a word	Studies , boys , speaks
3-	Go with all stems of a given part of speech.	eats (v.), thinks (v.),
4-	Do not pile up : only one ends a word	He is <u>worki</u> ng <u>hardl</u> y.

Table 2: In table 2 the inflectional suffixes are divided according to nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The eight inflectional suffixes are also listed with examples to make them clear.

Table 2 English Inflectional Suffixes

No	Grammatical class	Suffix	Example
1	Noun	S " Plural" - 'S " possessive"	The two girls had eaten dinner. The cat's tail was twitching.
2	Verb	-ed past tense -S 3 rd person present tense. -ing present participle. -en past participle	The blackest dog never barked. The smaller dog barks a lot. The cat's tail was twitching. The two girls had eaten a dinner .
3	Adjectives	-er " comparative" est " superlative"	The smaller dog barks a lot. The blackest dog never barked.

4	Gerund	-ing "verbal and nominal"	Brown's deftly painting his daughter is a delight to watch.
---	---------------	---------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------

This table has suffixes according to the present day English.

2.2 Types of Inflectional Suffixes:

In this research, I will adopt strategies' document model in giving the nine inflectional suffixes in English.

These suffixes are stated below:

- 1- {- Spl.} noun plural, as in: oxen .
- 2- {-S sgps} noun singular passive, as in: boy's.
- 3- {-S pl ps} noun plural passive, as in: men's.
- 4- {-s 3rd} presentation third person singular, as in: teaches.
- 5- {-ing vb} present participle, as in: studying.
- 6- {-D -PT} past tense, as in: played.
- 7- {-D pp} past participle, as in: eaten.
- 8- {-er cp} comparative, as in: sooner.
- 9- {-est sp} superlative, as in: soonest

Each of the following inflectional suffixes given above will be discussed in detail.

2.2.1 {- s pl}:

The inflectional plural (s) can be used with regular nouns. There are many nouns in English that can take the plural (s). But, there are irregular nouns that can take the " (-en plural, voicing, mutation,

plural)"⁴. {Quirk et al, 1973: 81). E.g.

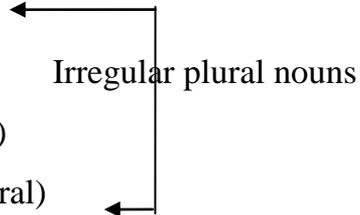
1-I saw the teachers. (regular " s").

2- We saw the culves. (Voicing)

3- My feet are painful. (mutation)

4- The sheep were here (zero plural)

5- I sold the oxen last week. (en plural)



Fromkin and Rodman (1978: 153) state that " An interesting thing about inflectional morphemes in English is that they always "surround" derivational morphemes E.g

6- The meetings were fine.

2.2.2 {-s sg ps}:

Here, the singular passive ('s) has the apostrophe (') that is used to show the passive aspect. The apostrophe is employed with, sometimes, the animate noun or expression. An apostrophe is used with the regular nouns and irregular ones. Here is the example of regular singular noun:

7-I found the boy's bag.

2.2.3. {-spl ps}:

Here, with regular plural passive the apostrophe (') is put after the (s) as in:

8- I found the boys' bag.

In case of plural regular passive, we put the apostrophe after the

(s) to form this case.

Passive (s') have six cases according to the meaning they carry:

A-passive genitive, as in:

10- My sons' wife. (my son has a wife).

B- Subjective genitive, as in:

11- the boys' application . (the boy applied)

C- Objective genitive, as in:

12- The family's' support (---- supports the family)

D- Genitive of origin, as in:

13- the girls' story. (the girls told a story).

E- Descriptive genitive, as in:

14- A women's college. (a collage for women).

F- Genitive of measure and portative genitive, as in:

15- A ten days' absence. (the absence lasted ten days).

2.2.4. {- s 3rd } :

The suffix (S) is added to the verb in the present tense, when the subject is third person – singular and declarative, as in :

16- He gives the apples to his mother.

2.2.5. {- ing vb}:

The inflectional suffix (-ing) is added to the end of the verb to form the progressive aspect, as in :

17- John is playing football now.

"The verbal inflectional suffixes {- ing vb} has two homophones

in the {-ing}: the first one is called nominal derivational suffix {-ing nm} ---- the nominal is obvious derivational, since it permits the addition of an inflectional suffix to close it of ---- the second homophone of {-ing vb} is the adjectival morpheme {-ing adj}---- (Stageberg, 1971: 73) as in the following example :

18- He was meeting the train {-ing vb}

19- He attended the meeting {-ing nm}

20- It is a very comforting thought {-ing- adj}

"The (-ing) form of a verb when used as a noun is called the gerund----- . When used as an adjectiv or a verb---- it is called the present participle" ⁷ (Huddleston: 1984:24) .In (18), the (-ing) ending is a morpheme which is required by the syntactic rules of the language to signal "tense" or aspect.

When the (-ing) has neither verbal function nor clearly verbal meaning, it is a derivational suffix"⁸ (Zandvoort, 1972: 306).

2.2.6 {D pt}:

Also, we have the regular and irregular past tense with verbs, Verbs that have (-ed) suffixes are regular verbs but those that are not inflected with (-ed) are irregular verbs, as in:

21- They played tennis. (regular verbs).

22- I saw him there. (irregular verb).

Quirk et al (1973: 31) state that " irregular verbs typically, but not necessary, have variation in their base vowel: find – found, write – written Irregular verbs have avowing number of distinct

forms. The only form that need to be listed for irregular verbs are the base (v), the past (v---ed1), and the participle (v---ed2).

This means that the irregular verbs change the vowel sound in order to change the tense form from the present case into the past one as well as the past participle. There are some adjectives having the same suffix (ed1, and ed2), but these adjectives have homophones that change the inflectional suffix to be derivational, as in:

23- He is, now, refused.

2.2.7 {-D---pp}:

The past participle is used to form the perfect tense, the passive and the non-finite clauses with the auxiliaries (have, has, and had) as in:

24- They have done their work. (active verbal group)

25-He had promised him to say the truth.

The past participle is also, used to form the passive voice with the auxiliary (to be) as in:

26- He was arrested by the police. (Passive verbal group).

When it is passive, "the ---ed participle is often used as adjective"¹⁰. (Close, 1975: 84) as in:

27- The injured man was taken to the hospital.

Active participles are rarely used in this way. We could not use, for example, (arrived) as an adjective before (guests) as in:

28- The guests have arrived, but not the arrived guests.

An ----ed participle is often made into a compound with the help of (well, badly, half, as in :

29- A well- finisheded job.

2.2.8. {---er cp}:-

The adjective suffixes -er and -est are also considered inflectional suffixes. They are used when comparing two things (-er) or more than two things (--est), for example:

30- My brother is olderer than his.

(Marchand (1979: 209) states his own point of view and mentions that " the formatives (-er,and--est) as expressing degrees of comparison" ¹¹ For example:

31-Paul is olderer than Peter.

He adds that we could not substitute anyone morpheme word for bi- morphemic (old-er) whereas in:

32-He is rather oldish.

The adjectives (old) can take the place of (oldish) we use the (--er) and (--est) suffixes with the one syllable adjectives, but we use (more) and (most) with the adjectives that have more than one syllable as in :

33- She is more beautiful than her sister.

34- She is the most beautiful girl in the group.

There are some adjectives that take the (er) and (more) comparative. For example:

Beastly —————> beastlier —————> More beastly.

It should be noted that there is a small group of highly frequent adjectives having their corresponding comparatives and superlatives formed different stems as:

good —————> better —————> best.
bad —————> worse —————> worsts.

The point which must be noted is that the inflectional morpheme {-er cp} has two homophones. The first is the derivational suffixes {-er n} which is attached to verb to form nouns, as in :

fish —————> fisher

35- I saw the fisher on his boot fishing.

It also, attached the non- verbal stem as in:

36- The teen – agers are foolish boys.

The meaning of (35) is that which performs the addition of the verb stem" while in (36), it means that which is related to".

The second derivational (---er) morpheme appears at the end of the word like: (chatter, mutter, ---etc.)

This {-er rp} conveys the meaning of repetition (Zandvoort (1972:299-300) states that " –er is freely used to form agent- noun from the verb:(hunter, painter, ---etc.).Most of these denote persons following arugular trade or profession, they form compounds with words denoting the object of the action: book, seller. Some are nouns of animals: (rooster----etc.) Agent – noun in (--er) may also denote persons doing something either regularly or occasionally, but not by the way of trade or profession: a steady

drinker"¹².

(Huddleston (1984: 27) states that " the (--er) is used form "derivational noun" ¹³. He adds that derivational noun like (singer) is accordingly derived from (sing) by a lexical, not an inflectional processes: They are forms of different lexical.

2.2.9. {- est sp}:

The superlative degree made by (--est) is added to the end of the one syllable adjectives as in:

37- My brother is the eldest in the family.

With the disyllabic adjectives, we use "most" as in:

38- He is the most handsome boy in the college.

Section Three

3.1 Data Analysis

(Hutchinson and waters (1987: 58) state that there is a number of ways in which data is gathered here to be analyzed in different studies. The commonest ways of gathering data are "questionnaires, interviews, observations, data collections (i.e. gathering texts and informal consultations". With sponsors, learners, and others. Since dealing with some chosen sentences, the way of questionnaires is followed in gathering information, the table given below explains the instructions, and the percentages of the inflectional suffixes.

The twenty sentences are given to third year students. They have to analyze the nine inflectional suffixes that are given by

Stageberg.

In fact, I chose the students of the third year, because, in my research paper, followed stageberg's model that is given to second year students and it is explained in the third year in detail.

Table 3: The distraction and the percentages of the inflectional suffixes:

NO	Inflectional suffixes	Correct answers	percentages %	Incorrect answer	Percentages %
1	-s p l	18	27%	7	28%
2	-S sg sp	2	8%	23	22%
3	-S pl ps	16	64%	9	36%
4	- S 3 rd sg	8	32%	17	68%
5	-Ing vb	16	64%	9	36%
6	D -pt	23	92%	2	8%
7	D p.p	12	48%	13	52%
8	-er cp	7	28%	18	72%
9	Est sp	12	48%	13	52%

The table given above shows that most of the third year students have a problem in distinguishing the inflectional suffixes like: (-s sg ps, 23 (22%), S third person 17(68%), - Dpp 13 (52%), -er cp 18 (27%) and, -est 13(52%).

Here are some of the sentences that the students of the third

year couldn't distinguish.

39- Chitterlow found Kipps' name in a newspaper. {-S sg ps}

40- Juana buys eggs everyday. {-S 3rd}

41- I have swum in the river for three hours. (-D pp)}

42- Ralph is quicker than his brother. {-er cp}

43- This book is the most expensive in the library. {-er cp}.

This means that there are some students who can differentiate between two of the inflectional suffixes given in the table like: (-D pp, and est sp).

The percentages are (52%), these percentages are about to be equal, but that does not mean that the students don't have problem in distinguishing them. Most of the students could not distinguish. (- s pl, spl ps, ---ing vb, and d pt).

Results

Testing the different inflectional suffixes leads to the following concluding remarks:

1. Some of the inflectional suffixes like (-S sg ps, 3rd person, -d p.p, --er cp, and -est sp) are difficult for some students to distinguish.

This is approved by the table given in section three, table 2.

2. According to the hypothesis given in section one, the results of the analysis and percentages, given in section three, approved the validity of the hypothesis.

3. As the error of the students appeared, difficult suffixes were the {-s sg ps , -er cp}.
4. According to the tests given to the third stage students , it appears that there are some points of weaknesses especially in (-s sg ps , -er cp).

Suggestions

According to the percentages of errors, which are important, I suggest for the students of the third year and their teachers to take the following points into consideration.

- Taking more examples about (S singular passive, S 3rd person singular, and er comparative) in which they use.
- It is a morphophonemic problem related to irregularities of nouns (number systems)
- Checking the student's level step by step and every now and then.
- Trying to find useful device by taking samples of exemplifying, these suffixes from native English teachers.

Appendix

No.	The wrong sentences	The correct sentences
-----	---------------------	-----------------------

1-	Sali bought two <u>oxes</u> yesterday.	Sali bought two <u>oxen</u> yesterday.
2-	Mary is a <u>gooder</u> than Rose.	Mary is <u>better</u> than Rose.
3-	Jack sold ten <u>sheeps</u> last week.	Jack sold ten <u>sheep</u> last week.
4-	I found the <u>mens'</u> <u>books</u> in the classroom.	I found the <u>men's books</u> in the classroom.
5-	George, as well as, John <u>plays</u> football every day.	George, as well as, John <u>play</u> football every day.
6-	Nancy may <u>does</u> her home work last night	Nancy may <u>do</u> her home work last night.
7-	Nada doesn't play tennis. Nether <u>does</u> they.	Nada doesn't play tennis. Nether <u>do</u> they.
8-	Juana <u>have buyed</u> the eggs .	Juana <u>has bought</u> the eggs .
9-	Ralph is more <u>quick</u> than his brother.	Ralph is <u>quicker</u> than his brother.
10-	John and Sam are <u>sended</u> to the jail.	John and Sam are <u>sent</u> to the jail.
11-	This book is the <u>expensivest</u> in the library.	This book is the <u>most expensive</u> in the library.
12-	I bought five <u>magazine</u> .	I bought five <u>magazines</u> .
13-	Kelly is the <u>old</u> in the family.	Kelly is the <u>oldest</u> in the family.
14-	Chitterlow found kipps' name in a newspaper.	Chitterlow found kipps's name in a newspaper.
15-	William is a <u>big</u> Ran to go home now.	William is a <u>bagging</u> Ran to go home now.
16-	I lay the rope along the wall last night.	I laid the rope along the wall last night.
17-	We saw many natural <u>phenomenon</u> in the sky last week.	We saw many natural <u>phenomena</u> in the sky last week.
18-	Hala saw that Rasha <u>come</u> .	Hala saw that Rasha <u>came</u> .
19-	I have <u>swim</u> in the river for three hours.	I have <u>swum</u> in the river for three hours.
20-	The bird with the white color <u>fly</u> around my house every day.	The bird with the white color <u>flies</u> around my house every day.

References

1. Close, A.R. (1975): **A Reference Grammar for Students of English**. London: Longman Group Ltd.
2. Fromkin, V. and Robert Rodman (1978): **An introduction to language**, 2nd edn. Newyork: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
3. Hutchinson, T. and A. Waters (1987): **English for Specific Purpose**. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
4. Kelly, W. (1998): **Suffixes and Prefixes**. Department of Linguistics, University of Oregon. Longman .Ltd.
5. Lyons, J. (1974): **Language**. Cambridge. Longman .Ltd
6. Marchand, H. (1982): **The Categories and Types of Present- day English Word- Formation**. London. University press.
7. Quirk, R., S. Greenbaum, G. Leech, and J. Svartvik (1973): **A University Grammar of English**. London. Longman. Ltd.
8. Huddleston, R. (1984): **Introduction to the Grammar of English**. Cambridge University Press.
9. Stageberg, N. (1971): **An Introductory English Grammar**, 2nd edn. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
10. Zandvort, R.W. (1972): **A Handbook of English Grammar**. London Longman Group. Ltd.

11. Wikipedia. Org/ wiki/ suffix # inflectional suffixes