

ANALYSIS OF SUFFIX AND PREFIXES IN MALAY LANGUAGES

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Annotation: *Affixation is one of the most productive word-formation processes in the Malay language. Prefixes and suffixes play a fundamental role in creating new lexical items and expressing grammatical and semantic relationships. This study investigates the morphological structures and semantic functions of Malay prefixes and suffixes, focusing on their productivity, derivational patterns, and lexical meanings.*

Keywords: *Malay language, morphology, affixation, prefix, suffix, derivation, word formation, lexical semantics.*

In Malay language suffix and prefix play an important role in word formation. Affixation represents one of the fundamental mechanisms of word formation in the Malay language and reflects the dynamic interaction between morphology and semantics. As an agglutinative language, Malay demonstrates a relatively transparent morphological structure in which affixes attach to lexical bases without substantially altering the phonological identity of the root. Consequently, prefixes and suffixes not only generate new lexical units but also encode grammatical and semantic information essential for communication.

Previous studies have primarily concentrated on the grammatical classification of Malay affixes and their syntactic behaviour. Classical works such as Tatabahasa Dewan and Nahu Melayu Mutakhir provide comprehensive descriptions of affix functions; however, relatively little attention has been devoted to analysing the relationship between affix productivity and lexical-semantic development. In particular, the mechanisms through which prefixes and suffixes contribute to semantic extension, category change, and lexical innovation require further investigation. The objective of this study is to analyse the morphological productivity and lexical-semantic characteristics of Malay prefixes and suffixes, thereby identifying their respective roles in the derivational system of the language.

Previous studies by Asmah Haji Omar (2009), Abdullah Hassan (2006), and Nik Safiah Karim et al. (2015) have provided comprehensive descriptions of Malay affixes from grammatical and functional perspectives. Nevertheless, these studies mainly classify affixes according to their grammatical functions, whereas relatively little attention has been paid to the interaction between morphological productivity and lexical-semantic development. Consequently, the semantic mechanisms underlying derivational processes remain insufficiently explained.

The present study addresses this gap by examining how prefixes and suffixes contribute simultaneously to morphological derivation and semantic transformation. Rather than considering affixes solely as grammatical markers, this research analyses them as lexical-semantic operators that influence the formation of new conceptual meanings.

The research employs descriptive, structural, comparative and lexical-semantic methods. Linguistic data were extracted from Tatabahasa Dewan, Kamus Dewan Perdana, contemporary Malay literary works, and official publications of Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. Morphological analysis was conducted to identify derivational patterns, while componential semantic analysis was used to determine semantic changes resulting from affixation.

The investigation focuses on highly productive prefixes (**meN-**, **peN-**, **ber-**, **ter-**, **di-**) and suffixes (**-kan**, **-i**, **-an**). Productivity was evaluated according to the frequency of occurrence, derivational versatility, and semantic diversity. The analysis confirms that prefixes constitute the most productive derivational category in Malay morphology. The prefix **meN-** derives dynamic verbs from nominal, adjectival, and verbal bases while preserving semantic transparency. Examples include *tulis - menulis*, *catat - mencatat*, and *warna - mewarnai*. Besides changing grammatical categories, this prefix introduces an agentive or dynamic semantic feature that characterises intentional action.

Similarly, the prefix **peN-** functions as a productive nominaliser. It derives agent nouns from verbal bases (*ajar - pengajar*, *tulis - penulis*, *kaji - pengkaji*), thereby encoding the semantic feature of agency. The high productivity of **peN-** can be explained by its compatibility with a broad range of lexical bases and its relatively predictable semantic interpretation.

The prefix **ber-** demonstrates multifunctionality by expressing possession, existence, habitual activity, and intransitivity. Unlike **meN-**, whose principal function involves verbal derivation, **ber-** often produces verbs describing states or ongoing conditions (*berjalan*, *berbaju*, *berpengalaman*). This semantic flexibility contributes to its high frequency in modern Malay.

Suffixes exhibit a different pattern of derivation. The suffix **-kan** generally introduces causative or benefactive meanings (*besar - membesarkan*, *baik - membaikkan*), whereas **-i** typically indicates locative or repetitive action (*isi - mengisi*, *hormat - menghormati*). The suffix **-an** derives nouns denoting results, collections, locations, or abstract entities (*makan - makanan*, *kumpul - kumpulan*, *bangun - bangunan*).

Unlike prefixes, suffixes rarely create entirely new lexical categories independently. Instead, they refine, extend, or specify meanings already encoded in the lexical base. Consequently, suffixes exhibit lower derivational productivity despite their important semantic functions.

The findings suggest that morphological productivity is closely associated with semantic transparency. Affixes displaying predictable semantic behaviour are considerably more productive than those characterised by lexical restrictions or semantic irregularities. This observation supports cognitive approaches to morphology, which regard derivation as an interaction between formal linguistic structure and conceptual meaning.

The study demonstrates that Malay prefixes and suffixes perform complementary functions within the derivational system of the language. Prefixes represent the principal mechanism for lexical expansion and grammatical category formation, whereas suffixes primarily contribute to semantic specification and argument structure modification. Their productivity depends not only on morphological compatibility but also on semantic regularity and lexical accessibility.

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