

The Use of Suffixes in Narrative Writing: A Case Study of Thai EFL Learners

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Abstrak: This study investigates the use of English suffixes in narrative writing by Thai learners of English as a foreign language. Given the significance of suffixes in second/foreign language acquisition, understanding how Thai learners employ suffixes in narrative contexts is crucial. A descriptive approach was adopted, with data collected from 12 eighth-grade students at Tarbiatulwatan Mulniti Junior High School in Thailand. The students' narrative writing assignments were analyzed to identify their usage of key inflectional suffixes (-ed, -s/es, -est, and -ing) and derivational suffixes (e.g., -ly). The findings revealed that students commonly utilized inflectional suffixes to mark past tense, plural nouns, and superlative adjectives. However, some students demonstrated difficulties with spelling, particularly when converting words ending in "y" to "i." Additionally, the use of derivational suffixes was limited, with only a few instances of employing the -ly suffix to form adverbs. These findings shed light on Thai learners' proficiency in using English suffixes in narrative writing and have implications for language pedagogy. Understanding the challenges they face can aid educators in developing targeted instructional strategies to enhance suffix usage. Further research is warranted to explore factors influencing the learning of derivational suffixes and to extend this study to learners of varying proficiency levels.

Keywords: Writing, Suffixes, Narrative text.

INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a fundamental tool for communication in everyday life, acting as a bridge that connects people across diverse backgrounds. English, being a global language, has experienced considerable influence from other languages (Crystal, 2003; Jenkins, 2014). Its widespread use as a lingua franca enables communication between individuals from non-English-speaking countries and English speakers (Seidlhofer, 2013). In today's interconnected world, proficiency in English has grown in importance, allowing individuals to share ideas, opinions, and interests across borders. For Thai learners, acquiring English proficiency is vital, as English is taught as a foreign language from primary through higher education levels (Baker & Jarunthawatchai, 2017). However, mastering English poses challenges due to the significant differences between English and Thai languages.

Previous research has explored various aspects of suffix usage in different settings. For instance, Itma Karee in her study "The Use of Suffixes in Narrative Essays by Thai Student at MA Nurul Islam in Jember" investigated the use of suffixes such as Suffixes-i, Suffixes-Kan, Suffixes-Nya, and Suffixes-an in Indonesian language. While the study has contributed valuable insights, there remains a knowledge gap regarding the specific use of suffixes in narrative writing by Thai learners of English as a foreign language.

In light of this, the present study aims to investigate the use of English suffixes in narrative writing by Thai learners. The study employs a descriptive approach by means of analyzing written assignments from 12 eighth-grade students at Tarbiatulwatan Mulniti Junior High School in Thailand. The primary objective is to examine how Thai students employ suffixes in generating narrative texts, with a focus on inflectional suffixes, such as -ed, -s/es, and -ing, as well as derivational suffixes, including -ly. The findings of this research are expected to contribute to a better understanding of Thai learners' proficiency in using English suffixes within the context of narrative writing and provide valuable pedagogical implications for language educators.

The subsequent sections of this article delve into the research methodology, present and discuss the findings, and conclude with a discussion of the implications and suggestions for future research.

METHOD

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive design to identify patterns in the use of English suffixes by EFL learners. The selection of this design also aims to maintain objectivity by minimizing biases and adhering to scientific principles (Ary, et al., 2019).

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of eighth-grade students at SMP Tarbiatulwatan Mulniti School during the academic year 2021/2022. However, only 12 students from this school were selected to participate in this study. These students were selected via a purposive sampling based on the criteria that they have relatively high academic performance and grades. This approach aims to ensure that the data collected for this study are relevant to the research objectives and potentially provide valuable insights into the use of suffixes in narrative writing by Thai EFL learners.

Data Collection and Analysis

The primary data-gathering technique used in this study involves analyzing handwritten narrative documents produced by the selected eighth-grade students at SMP Tarbiatulwatan Mulniti School. Upon data collection, the first author (researcher) analyzed the narrative texts to identify the use of suffixes by the research participants. The focus of the analysis was on inflectional suffixes, such as -ed, -s/es, and -ing, and derivational suffixes like -ly. The analysis involved categorizing and quantifying the occurrences of these suffixes in the narrative texts.

Ethical Considerations

The present study adheres to ethical principles to protect the participants' confidentiality and privacy. That is, the participants' identities will be kept anonymous, and informed consent was obtained from the school and students' parents or guardians before data collection.

FINDINGS

The Use of Suffix -ed

In this study, the first researcher examined the use of the suffix -ed in students' narrative writing. Among the 12 students' narrative texts analyzed, a total of 42 instances of the -ed suffix were found. The majority of these instances were correctly used as inflectional suffixes to indicate the past form of verbs in accordance with the rules of narrative text structure, which requires the use of the past tense. Examples of correct usage include:

SB: She **lived** with her mother. Her mother never **allowed**...

SK: The witch **curse**d the princess... Aurora **touch**ed it.

MUS: ... twin sisters **live**d together... they **play**ed in the Bangkok river.

However, a few students demonstrated some difficulties with using the -ed suffix correctly. Notably, three students added -ed after verbs ending in "y" without changing the "y" to "i," resulting in spelling errors. For instance:

SB: She **cry**ed because she did not find the way back home.

NM: He became the richest man and **marry**ed with Princess Jasmine.

MUS: She just **cry**ed and prayed that her sister would find life.

Additionally, one student misspelled the suffix, omitting one letter 'e' in "happened," as shown in the sentence:

SD: Tomorrow it **happend** on her bed, a lot of money.

Moreover, some students incorrectly added the -ed suffix after modals and infinitive verbs, which should not take this suffix. Examples include:

MUS: Her twin sister cannot **help**ed and ask for other persons to **help**ed.

(It should be "Her twin sister could not help and ask for other persons to help").

Furthermore, five instances of the -ed suffix were mistakenly added to irregular nouns, rather than changing the verb form, resulting in incorrect word usage. Examples include:

SD: A little girl **founded** a book in a very old house.

(It should be "A little girl found a book in a very old house").

MUS: She followed butterflies in the river and **finded** her sister.

(It should be "She followed butterflies in the river and found her sister").

SY: She **wearred** a mask to cover her face.

(It should be "She wore a mask to cover her face").

From 12 students writing narrative text, it was found one adjective suffix that from noun and added -ed to be an adjective. It is shown on one of students writing narrative text below:

FS: One day, young man **named** lucious lived in the small village. (This student add -ed to noun "name" to change it into adjective).

The Use of Suffix -s/es

In students' writing narrative text, -s/-es that were found only used for plural nouns. For example:

FS: His family have a lot of cows.

MH: Cinderella lived with her stepmother and sister.

MU: one day they played in the Bangkok rivers. (Those students added -s to regular noun as a form of regular plural noun).

The suffix -es also found on students' writing narrative that added to the irregular noun. Irregular noun do not need to be added -s/-es but some students still added it. As it is shown on these examples:

SB: She ran from cats, mouses and insects.

NUM: Peoples around the house still see the wife everyday....He accepted

that his wife and child was dead (It's should be "people around the house still see the wife everyday..... He accepted that his wife and children was dead)

SD: she lost her closest persons. (It's should be "She lost her closest people)

One students also added suffix -s on singular noun. As it shown on this sentence:

MH: She left her left shoes.

(Because it is only for the left (Singular), it should be " she left her left shoe).

Another -s that students added when it is not needed, when one student added -s to adjective. It could change the adjective into noun.

SW: He became the strongest wizard and goods wizard.

(The students wanted to explain the wizard is good, but he added -s on the adjective that could change its meaning, it should be "He became the strongest wizard and good wizard).

The Use of Suffix -ly

In students' writing narrative text, also found some adverbs that students used to compose narrative text.

For example:

NUM: slowly, he realize that his wife was ghost. Finally, he accepted that his wife and child was dead.

MH : She lived with seven dwarfs peacefully.

SK : She finally woke up.

It is also found that few students used suffix -ly but did not change the letter "y" into "i" when the adverb ended with letter "y". for example :

SB: Luckily her mother heard her crying.

(It's should be " Luckily, her mother heard her crying).

MS: Snow white woke up and live happily ever after.

(It's should be "Snow White woke up and live happily ever after).

The Use of Suffix -ing

In students' writing narrative, also found suffix -ing. But all suffix -ing that were found all were used incorrectly. 2 students used suffix -ing on verb that should be in the form of simple past tense.

MH: Cinderella always cleaned the house, cooking and everything.

(It's should be "Cinderella always cleaned the house, cooked and everything).

ND: Putnam and her family going to holiday.

(It's should be" Putnam and her family went to holiday).

The other student using suffix -ing after modal as it is shown below:

MUS: her sister fell in to the river and cannot swimming.

(It's should be" her sister fell into the river and could not swim).

Another student used suffix -ing to verb that should be a noun. As it is shown below:

SB: Her mother heard her crying. (It's should be "Her mother heard her cry).

The Use of Suffix -est.

For superlative, in this students' narrative text they also used suffix -est. It is found on some sentences that students composed to explain the superlative. For example:

NM: He became the richest man.

SD: She lost her closest people.

SW: He became the strongest wizard.

For suffix -est, the students used it correctly to compose the narrative sentence.

DISCUSSION

The results of the data analysis shed light on the patterns of suffix usage among 12 eighth-grade students at SMP Tarbiatulwatan Mulniti School. The analysis revealed that the most commonly used inflectional suffix was -ed, which is frequently used by learners to indicate the past form of verbs in accordance with the narrative text structure that requires the use of simple past tense. The majority of students demonstrated a good grasp of this rule, correctly applying the -ed suffix to regular verbs. However, some learners struggled with spelling conventions, often failing to change the final "y" of a verb to "i" before adding -ed. Additionally, a few students mistakenly applied the -ed suffix to modals and infinitive verbs, which should not take this inflectional ending. These errors indicate the need for focused attention on verb conjugation and spelling rules in language instruction.

Another inflectional suffix, -s/es, was used correctly by students to indicate plural nouns. Learners successfully applied -s to regular nouns to form plural nouns, demonstrating their understanding of basic pluralization rules. However, errors were observed when students added -s/es to irregular nouns, resulting in incorrect noun forms. This highlights the need for explicit instruction on irregular noun plurals to help students master the English pluralization system more effectively (DeKeyser, 1995; Rasuki, 2017). Alternatively, teachers may opt to implement meaningful and context-rich activities that encourage students to use suffixes in their writing (Rasuki, 2016).

In terms of derivational suffixes, the -ly suffix was appropriately used by learners to form adverbs. The addition of -ly to adjectives effectively transformed them into adverbs, enabling students to convey actions, manner, or time within their narrative texts. While most students employed -ly correctly, a few struggled with the spelling convention of changing "y" to "i" before adding -ly, leading to minor errors in their writing. This emphasizes the importance of teaching students spelling rules associated with suffix usage to improve accuracy in their writing.

Furthermore, the -est suffix, used to indicate superlative adjectives, was applied correctly by learners. Students effectively conveyed the sense of highest or utmost degree through the use of -est in their narrative texts. These findings suggest that students have a good grasp of superlative adjective formation and can accurately apply the -est suffix to compare items or characters within their stories.

Overall, the study's findings highlight the proficiency of Thai learners of English as a foreign language in utilizing suffixes within the context of narrative writing. The correct use of various suffixes, such as -ed, -s/es, -ly, -ing, and -est, indicates the students' understanding of English grammar and morphology. However,

the identified errors, particularly in spelling conventions and application of suffixes to irregular nouns and verbs, point to areas for targeted language instruction.

Some Implications for Second/Foreign Language Education

The results of this study carry important implications for language education. To enhance learners' proficiency in suffix usage, language educators should design targeted instructional interventions. Providing explicit instruction on spelling rules associated with suffixes, particularly the change from "y" to "i" before adding -ed or -ly, can address the identified spelling errors. Furthermore, lessons on the formation of irregular plurals and past tense verbs will help learners accurately apply -s/es and -ed suffixes.

Incorporating meaningful and context-rich activities that encourage students to use suffixes in their writing can also support language development. Teachers may assign creative writing tasks or storytelling exercises that prompt students to employ various suffixes to convey different narrative elements effectively.

Furthermore, the use of scaffolding techniques, such as modeling correct suffix usage and providing immediate feedback, can aid learners in internalizing these grammatical rules. Regular formative assessments can help track learners' progress and identify areas that need further attention and support.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the use of suffixes in narrative writing by Thai learners of English as a foreign language. The findings highlighted learners' proficiency in employing inflectional and derivational suffixes to construct narrative texts. While students demonstrated a relatively solid understanding of various suffixes, identified errors in spelling conventions and application of suffixes to irregular words underscore the need for focused instructional support.

By addressing these areas of improvement through targeted language instruction, language educators can empower learners to enhance their linguistic skills and proficiency in utilizing suffixes effectively. As learners gain confidence in their ability to use suffixes accurately, they will develop stronger narrative writing skills, leading to more expressive and engaging storytelling in English as a foreign language.

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