EXPLORING ONLINE MORPHOLOGY INSTRUCTION FOR EFL LEARNERS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Mezia Kemala Sari, Suci Rahmah Safinatunnajah
Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Barat
E-mail: meziakemalasari@umsb.ac.id

Abstrak

Peralihan pembelajaran ke sistem daring pascapandemi COVID-19 telah membawa perubahan signifikan dalam praktik pembelajaran di perguruan tinggi, termasuk dalam pengajaran mata kuliah linguistik seperti morfologi. Morfologi merupakan komponen penting dalam kompetensi kebahasaan yang berperan besar dalam pengembangan kosakata, pengenalan kata, dan pemahaman bahasa bagi pembelajar Bahasa Inggris sebagai Bahasa Asing (EFL). Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji peluang dan tantangan dalam pengajaran morfologi bahasa Inggris melalui pembelajaran daring. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif yang didasarkan pada kajian literatur, refleksi pengalaman mengajar, dan observasi praktik pembelajaran daring pada program studi pendidikan bahasa Inggris. Hasil pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa platform digital dan sumber belajar multimedia memberikan peluang besar untuk meningkatkan kesadaran morfologis dan keterlibatan mahasiswa. Pembelajaran daring memungkinkan penggunaan video, animasi, dan media visual interaktif untuk membantu pemahaman proses pembentukan kata seperti afiksasi, pemajemukan, peminjaman, dan penciptaan kata baru. Namun demikian, tantangan seperti keterbatasan jaringan internet, kendala teknis, minimnya interaksi, dan perbedaan kemampuan literasi digital mahasiswa masih menjadi hambatan. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengajaran morfologi secara daring merupakan pendekatan inovatif yang efektif apabila didukung oleh strategi pedagogis yang tepat dan kreatif.
Kata kunci: *morfologi, belajar daring, EFL, pembentukan kata, instruksi linguistik*

Abstract

The rapid shift to online learning following the COVID-19 pandemic has transformed instructional practices in higher education, including the teaching of linguistics courses such as morphology. Morphology, as a core component of linguistic competence, plays a crucial role in vocabulary development, word recognition, and language comprehension for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. This article aims to explore the opportunities and challenges of teaching English morphology through online learning environments. Employing a descriptive qualitative approach, this study is based on a critical review of relevant literature, reflective teaching experiences, and observation of online instructional practices in English education programs. The discussion highlights how digital platforms, multimedia resources, and visual learning tools provide significant opportunities to enhance students' morphological awareness and engagement. Online instruction allows for the use of videos, animations, and interactive materials that support students' understanding of word formation processes such as affixation, compounding, borrowing, and coinage. However, the study also identifies several challenges, including limited internet access, technical difficulties, reduced interaction, and students' varying levels of digital literacy. Despite these constraints, effective instructional design and creative use of digital media can mitigate many of these obstacles. The article concludes that teaching morphology online is not merely an alternative mode of instruction but a viable and innovative approach that can enrich language learning when supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies.
Keywords: *morphology, online learning, EFL, word formation, linguistic instruction*

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is an art. Each teacher has a uniqueness and characteristic from within himself which is reflected in the way he teaches, the way he conveys, the way he communicates with students, and so on. Since the outbreak of Covid a few years ago, studying online has suddenly become one of the most frequently used methods as an option. Because you can't learn directly, face-to-face in class, online learning is an effective and very smart solution. Recent research on technology-supported language learning underscores the benefits of adaptive and student-centered instructional designs that leverage multimedia and digital platforms to foster learner engagement and skill development (Ginting et al., 2024).

Several applications were born then from the hands of creatives since Covid came. Online learning is becoming a new culture that is quickly adopted by students around the world because it is considered easy, fast, innovative, and able to maintain the quality of the teaching and learning process. Whatever the subject, now everything can be taught online. Morphology is an interesting subject to teach in class. As a branch of pure linguistics, studying morphology is an interesting topic because we teach the process of forming words in English which is called the morphological process which is important in learning a foreign or another language like English.

Online learning has become more popular at all educational levels due to the development of digital technology and the COVID-19 pandemic's worldwide effects. To guarantee successful learning results, instructors in higher education, especially in language teaching situations, must modify their pedagogical approaches. Morphology is one of the fundamental topics in linguistics that demands significant instructional study.

Morphology is the branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the processes by which words are formed. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), morphological knowledge is essential because it supports vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and academic literacy. Previous studies have shown that morphological awareness contributes significantly to students' ability to decode unfamiliar words and understand complex texts (Carlisle, 2010; Bowers & Kirby, 2010).

Although morphology plays an important role in language learning, it is often considered a challenging subject to teach because of its abstract and analytical characteristics. These difficulties can become more apparent in online learning contexts, where interaction between lecturers and students is more limited than in face-to-face classes. At the same time, online learning also opens up new possibilities, particularly through the use of multimedia and interactive learning tools. For this reason, this article focuses on exploring both the opportunities and the challenges of teaching English morphology in online settings, as well as the pedagogical practices that may help make the learning process more effective.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of how English morphology is taught in online learning environments. Data were collected through a review of relevant literature on morphology instruction and online language learning, combined with reflective teaching experiences and observations of online morphology classes in an English Education Study Program. This approach allowed the researcher to capture both theoretical perspectives and practical classroom realities.

The data were analyzed by identifying recurring patterns and categorizing the findings into two main themes, namely the opportunities and the challenges of teaching morphology online. These themes were then interpreted using established linguistic theories and principles of language pedagogy, particularly those related to morphological awareness and vocabulary development (Booij, 2005; Carlisle, 2010; Bowers & Kirby, 2010).

Peer-reviewed journal articles and reputable books with an emphasis on morphology, vocabulary education, and online language learning that were published within the last ten years made up the material chosen for examination in order to guarantee the validity of the analysis. Additionally, recurrent teaching strategies, student reactions, and pedagogical problems that arose throughout online morphology lectures were recorded using reflective teaching notes. This study offers a more thorough and grounded understanding of how morphology instruction is implemented and experienced in online learning situations by combining insights from literature, reflection, and classroom observation (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION
Overview of Findings

This section presents an in-depth discussion of the results derived from the literature review, reflective teaching practices, and observations of online morphology instruction in an English Education Study Program. The findings are organized into thematic subsections that reflect major pedagogical outcomes observed in online morphology learning, including students' morphological awareness development, engagement and motivation, instructional effectiveness of digital media, and learning constraints encountered during online implementation.

Overall, the results indicate that online morphology instruction, when supported by appropriate pedagogical strategies and digital tools, contributes positively to students' understanding of word structure and word formation processes. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the role of morphological awareness in vocabulary growth and language comprehension (Carlisle, 2010; Bowers & Kirby, 2010).

1. **Development of Morphological Awareness in Online Learning**

    One of the most noticeable outcomes of online morphology instruction is the improvement in students' morphological awareness. Morphological awareness refers to learners' ability to recognize, analyse, and work with morphemes in words (Carlisle, 2010). Through structured online lessons that focused on affixation, compounding, and derivational processes, students showed a better ability to break down complex words into smaller, meaningful units.

    Online learning platforms allowed lecturers to present word formation processes step by step using visual aids such as slides, diagrams, and animated explanations. For example, students were guided to analyze words such as *development*, *unhappiness*, and *disadvantages* by identifying roots and affixes and explaining their semantic and grammatical functions. This instructional approach helped students understand that words are not isolated units but are systematically constructed according to morphological rules, as suggested by Booij (2005).

    Previous studies support this finding, indicating that explicit morphology instruction enhances learners' ability to infer meanings of unfamiliar words and supports long-term vocabulary acquisition (Bowers & Kirby, 2010; Flanigan et al., 2012). In the online context, recorded lectures and learning management systems enabled students to revisit explanations repeatedly, which further reinforced their morphological understanding.

2. **Effectiveness of Digital Media in Teaching Word Formation**

    The findings also reveal that digital media play a crucial role in facilitating the teaching of morphology online. The use of animated videos, interactive presentations, and digital worksheets enabled abstract linguistic concepts to be presented in a more concrete and accessible manner. This is particularly important in morphology, where learners often struggle to conceptualize invisible linguistic units such as morphemes.

Studies have reported positive outcomes when learners utilize digital language applications in autonomous and blended environments, highlighting the motivational and interactional affordances of such technologies (Hadina & Sari, 2023).

Video-based instruction proved effective in explaining complex processes such as derivation and compounding. For instance, animated sequences illustrating how prefixes and suffixes attach to base words helped students visualize morphological changes and their effects on meaning and word class. According to Mayer's multimedia learning theory, combining visual and verbal information enhances learners' cognitive processing (Mayer, 2009), which supports the effectiveness of multimedia use in online morphology instruction.

In addition, online discussion forums and collaborative tasks encouraged students to apply morphological analysis to authentic texts. Students were asked to identify morphologically complex words from articles or academic readings and explain their structure and meaning. This activity promoted deeper processing and application of morphological knowledge, consistent with the view that morphology instruction should be integrated with reading and vocabulary activities (Templeton, 2012).

3. **Student Engagement and Motivation**

Another important result concerns student engagement and motivation in online morphology learning. Observations indicate that students were more engaged when lessons incorporated interactive elements such as quizzes, polls, and group discussions. These activities helped maintain students' attention and reduced the monotony often associated with online lectures.

Morphology lessons that connected word formation to students' daily language use were particularly effective in increasing motivation. For example, analyzing commonly encountered words from social media, news headlines, or academic texts allowed students to see the practical relevance of morphology. This finding aligns with McCarthy (2002), who argues that understanding word structure empowers learners to use language more precisely and confidently.

However, engagement levels varied depending on students' digital literacy and access to stable internet connections. Students with limited technical resources tended to participate less actively, which suggests that engagement in online morphology learning is influenced not only by pedagogical design but also by infrastructural factors.

4. **Challenges in Online Morphology Instruction**

Despite these positive outcomes, several challenges emerged in the implementation of online morphology instruction. The most common issues were technical in nature, such as unstable internet connections, limited access to data, and problems with digital devices. These difficulties often disrupted the flow of the lessons and, in some cases, prevented students from participating fully in synchronous learning sessions.

Another challenge was reduced lecturer-student interaction. Morphology requires detailed explanation and immediate feedback, particularly when students are learning to analyze word structures. In online settings, delayed responses and limited opportunities for spontaneous clarification sometimes hindered students' understanding. This finding is consistent with previous studies highlighting interaction as a critical factor in successful online language learning (Moore & Kearsley, 2012).

Additionally, some students experienced cognitive overload when learning morphology online. The simultaneous processing of linguistic content, digital tools,

and technical instructions increased learners' cognitive demands. This suggests the need for careful instructional design to balance content complexity and technological use.

The main findings of this study can be summarized in Table 1, which highlights the observed opportunities and challenges in teaching morphology online.

Table 1. Opportunities and Challenges in Teaching Morphology Online

Aspect	Key Findings
Morphological Awareness	Improved ability to analyze and interpret word structure
Digital Media Use	Enhanced understanding through visual and multimedia resources
Student Engagement	Increased motivation through interactive and contextualized activities
Technical Issues	Internet instability and limited device access
Interaction	Reduced immediacy of feedback and discussion

Discussion

The findings of this study highlight the importance of morphology instruction in EFL contexts and show that online learning environments can support this instruction effectively when they are designed with care. Recent studies also indicate that technology-based learning environments can help develop learners' pragmatic competence in online English instruction, further strengthening the role of digital pedagogies in language education (Sari, Yoni, & Syam, 2025). In addition, these findings are in line with earlier research which shows that explicit instruction in morphology contributes to students' vocabulary development and reading comprehension (Carlisle, 2010; Bowers & Kirby, 2010).

Moreover, the use of multimedia tools fits well with current pedagogical approaches that emphasize multimodal learning in digital contexts. Although challenges remain, especially related to infrastructure and interaction, these issues do not reduce the educational value of teaching morphology online. Rather, they point to the importance of continuous innovation, adequate lecturer training, and strong institutional support.

CONCLUSION

Teaching English morphology online presents both opportunities and challenges. The use of digital media and interactive learning tools offers innovative ways to enhance students' understanding of word formation processes. However, technical limitations and reduced interaction remain significant challenges that need to be addressed.

It is suggested that lecturers employ creative instructional strategies, utilize diverse multimedia resources, and provide clear guidance to support students' learning. With appropriate pedagogical planning, online morphology instruction can be an effective and meaningful component of English language education.

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