TRANSPUBLIKA
Precise. Resilience. Felicitous.

Transformational Language, Literature, and Technology Overview in Learning
https://ojs.transpublika.com/index.php/TRANSTOOL
Online ISSN 2828-397X

https://doi.org/10.55047/transtool.v5i1.2158

Original Article

A Morphological Analysis of Derivational Suffix in the Short Story "How to Become a Writer" by Lorrie Moore

Mikhael Parlindungan Hutasoit

English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Letters, Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia
Email: mikhaelparlindungan9@gmail.com

Received : 10 February - 2026
Accepted : 11 April - 2026
Published online : 13 April - 2026

Abstract

The limited understanding of English word formation processes among language learners constitutes a persistent impediment to vocabulary acquisition and textual comprehension. This study examines the deployment of derivational suffixes in Lorrie Moore's short story "How to Become a Writer." As a fundamental component of English morphological processes, derivational suffixes generate novel lexical items while simultaneously effectuating transformations in the grammatical categorization and semantic properties of base forms, thereby augmenting learners' lexical repertoire and interpretive proficiency. Employing a descriptive qualitative paradigm, the corpus was systematically extracted from the aforementioned literary work and subsequently categorized according to their morphosyntactic transitions, encompassing verbal to nominal, adjectival to nominal, nominal to verbal, nominal to adjectival, verbal to adjectival, and adjectival to adverbial conversions. The analysis endeavors to elucidate how derivational suffixes instigate modifications in both the morphological configuration and semantic orientation of words within the textual context. The results show that derivational suffixes are frequently used in the short story and play an important role in forming new words that support the meaning of the narrative. The use of derivational suffixes helps express actions, qualities, and situations more clearly in the story. This study also shows that literary texts can be useful sources for learning morphology because they provide real examples of word formation in context. It is expected that this research can help students better understand derivational suffixes and improve their English vocabulary learning.

Keywords: Derivational Suffix, Lorrie Moore, Morphology, Short Story, Word Formation.

1. Introduction

Language plays a crucial role in human life as the primary means of communication and the carrier of knowledge, culture, and social interaction (Aswad & Wirentake, 2023). As societies develop, language also evolves dynamically to accommodate new concepts, technologies, and forms of expression (Richerson & Christiansen, 2024). English, as one of the most widely used international languages, has become an important medium in education, science, literature, and global communication. Therefore, understanding the linguistic system of English, particularly its word-formation processes, is essential for learners in developing their language competence (Azimova, 2025).

One important aspect of word formation in English is derivation, especially through the use of derivational suffixes. Derivational suffixes are morphemes attached to base forms to create new words, often resulting in a change of lexical category (part of speech) and/or meaning (Dixon, 2014). Mastery of derivational morphology helps learners to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary, expand their word knowledge, and comprehend texts more effectively

Copyright: © 2026 by the authors.
This is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the CC BY 4.0.

(Archibald & O'Grady, 2008). The use of derivational suffixes can be found in various written sources such as books, short stories, magazines, newspapers, academic texts, and other media.

This study focuses on the analysis of derivational suffixes found in Lorrie Moore's short story *"How to Become a Writer."* The analysis illustrate how derivational suffixes can change the grammatical category of a word and contribute to meaning modification. In English morphology, such processes demonstrate that suffixation is not merely a formal change but also affects the semantic and syntactic functions of words in context. By analyzing these forms in a literary text, this study aims to show how derivational morphology operates naturally in authentic language use.

Several previous studies have examined derivational suffixes in different types of discourse. Maulidina et al. (2019) found that derivational suffixes significantly influence word formation and meaning in news texts published in *The Jakarta Post*. Similarly, Khaerunisa (2021) reported that derivational suffixes play an important role in shaping lexical meaning in political speeches, particularly in Barack Obama's speeches. These studies demonstrate that derivational morphology has been widely investigated in journalistic and political genres.

However, there is a research gap in the analysis of derivational suffixes in literary texts, especially short stories, which present richer narrative, stylistic, and contextual variations. Most existing studies focus on news articles and formal speeches, while limited attention has been given to how derivational suffixes function in fictional narratives that reflect more diverse language use, including expressive, descriptive, and evaluative forms. Moreover, few studies specifically analyze derivational suffixes in Lorrie Moore's "How to Become a Writer," even though the text offers a uniquely self-referential and second-person narrative voice that foregrounds the process of language construction itself, making it a particularly fertile ground for examining how derivational suffixes operate within stylistically unconventional and emotionally layered discourse.

Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed morphological analysis of derivational suffixes in the short story *"How to Become a Writer."* The objectives of this study are: (1) to identify and classify the types of derivational suffixes found in the text, and (2) to describe the changes in lexical category and meaning resulting from these suffixes. The findings of this study are expected to contribute both theoretically to the field of morphology and practically to English language learning, particularly in enhancing students' awareness of word-formation processes and vocabulary development.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Morphology and Word Formation

Morphology constitutes the linguistic subdiscipline concerned with examining the internal architecture of words and the mechanisms underlying their formation. Lexical items may be comprised of free morphemes and bound morphemes, with derivation and inflection representing the predominant word formation processes in English. Inflectional affixes fulfill exclusively grammatical functions without effectuating any alteration in the lexical categorization of a word, whereas derivational affixes operate to generate entirely novel lexical items, frequently instigating transformations in both word class and semantic properties (Abdullah, 2025). As a result, derivation plays a central role in vocabulary development and lexical productivity in English.

2.2. Derivational Suffixes in English

Derivational suffixes are bound morphemes attached to base forms to create new words. They frequently change the lexical category of the base, such as verb to noun, adjective to noun, noun to adjective, or adjective to adverb, and may also modify meaning. The analytical framework of this study draws upon Martini's (2016) taxonomic classification of derivational suffixes, which categorizes suffixes according to the lexical category shifts they induce and the semantic modifications they engender upon the base form. This framework provides the structural basis for identifying, classifying, and interpreting each suffix encountered in the corpus. Complementarily, Dixon's (2014) theoretical account of word formation processes informs the analytical lens through which the functional and contextual dimensions of suffixation are examined, particularly in distinguishing productive from peripheral suffix usage across different discourse environments. Common derivational suffixes include -ion, -ness, -ize, -al, -less, and -ly, which are highly productive and appear across different registers of English. These suffixes enable speakers and writers to express processes, qualities, and evaluations in more compact and flexible ways, contributing to lexical richness in texts.

2.3. Derivational Morphology in Literary Texts

In literary discourse, derivational morphology contributes to narrative style, characterization, and the representation of abstract experiences and emotional states. Literary texts often rely on nuanced lexical choices to convey internal perspectives, evaluation, and psychological depth (Oatley, 1995). The short story "How to Become a Writer" by Lorrie Moore is characterized by reflective narration and expressive language, making it a suitable text for examining how derivational suffixes function in authentic literary contexts.

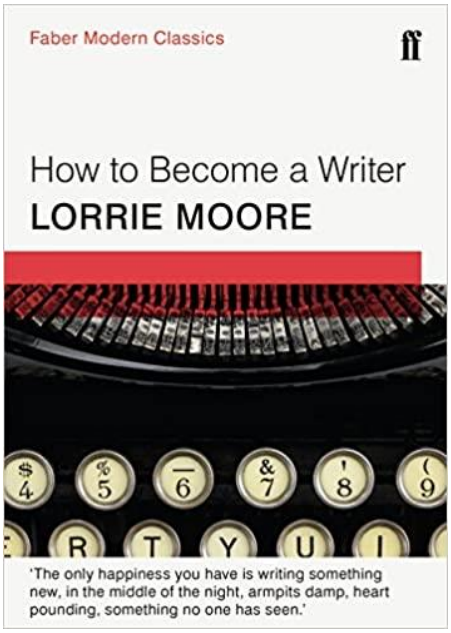


Figure 1. How to Become a Writer by Lorrie Moore

The presence of derivational forms in such a text illustrates how morphological processes operate beyond formal or informational genres and play a role in shaping literary meaning.

3. Methods

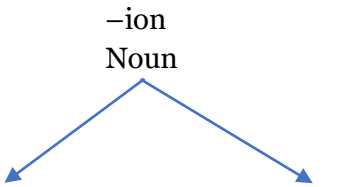
This study was analyzed using a descriptive qualitative research approach, since the data collected was in the form of a collection of words that could not be analyzed statistically. The short story "How to Become a Writer" comprises approximately 2,800 words, all of which were systematically examined as the corpus of this investigation. The entire data from this research is in the form of words that include derivational suffixes found in the short story. The object of this research is the derivational suffix found in "How to Become a Writer." The data were collected using the following steps: reading the short story, underlining words that contain suffixes that change the lexical category, and classifying and writing the words containing derivational suffixes. To ensure the accuracy and consistency of suffix identification, an inter-rater verification process was employed, wherein the identified words were cross-checked by an independent reviewer and any discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensus. Then the data were analyzed with the following steps: classifying the lexical category of derivational suffix, describing the meaning of the derivational suffix, and drawing the conclusion.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

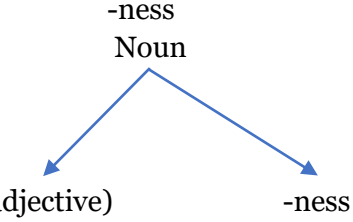
Based on the research analysis, the researcher wants to describe the 6 changes in the lexical category found in How to Become a Writer short story.

a. Verb into Noun



The word confession is constituted by two distinct morphemes, namely confess as the base morpheme and -ion as the bound morpheme. The base morpheme confess belongs to the verbal category, while -ion functions as a derivational suffix. The combination of confess and -ion yields a derivational process, as evidenced by the transformation in both lexical categorization and semantic properties. Specifically, the verbal form confess, denoting the act of disclosing truth or reality, undergoes a morphosyntactic conversion into the nominal form confession, which refers to a formal statement in which an individual acknowledges or admits something, as well as the act of rendering such a declaration.

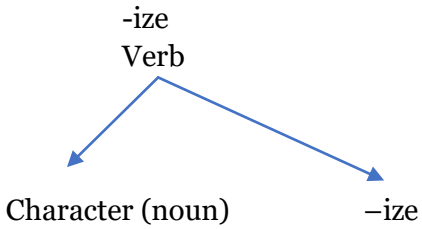
b. Adjective into noun



The word sickness is constituted by two distinct morphemes, namely sick as the base morpheme and -ness as the bound morpheme. The base morpheme sick belongs to the adjectival category, while -ness operates as a derivational suffix. The amalgamation of sick and

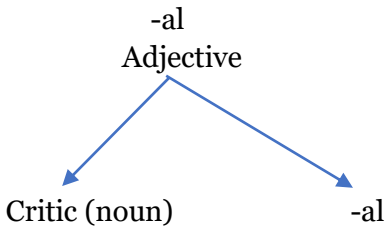
-ness exemplifies a derivational process, as evidenced by the discernible transformation in both lexical categorization and semantic properties. Specifically, the adjectival form sick, denoting a condition of physical or mental illness, undergoes a morphosyntactic conversion into the nominal form sickness, which encapsulates the experiential state of deteriorating health or bodily dysfunction.

c. Noun into Verb



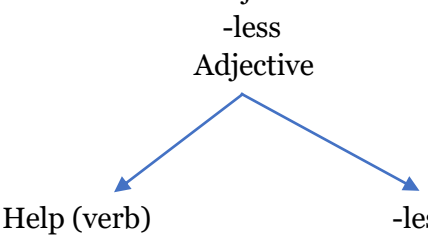
The word characterize is constituted by two distinct morphemes, namely character as the base morpheme and -ize as the bound morpheme. The base morpheme character belongs to the nominal category, while -ize operates as a derivational suffix. The amalgamation of character and -ize exemplifies a derivational process, as evidenced by the discernible transformation in both lexical categorization and semantic properties. Specifically, the nominal form character, denoting a personage or creature inhabiting a narrative work, undergoes a morphosyntactic conversion into the verbal form characterize, which signifies the act of embodying or manifesting the distinctive attributes and qualities representative of a particular individual, place, or entity.

d. Noun into Adjective



The word critical is constituted by two distinct morphemes, namely critic as the base morpheme and -al as the bound morpheme. The base morpheme critic belongs to the nominal category, while -al operates as a derivational suffix. The amalgamation of critic and -al exemplifies a derivational process, as evidenced by the discernible transformation in both lexical categorization and semantic properties. Specifically, the nominal form critic, denoting an individual who articulates evaluative judgments regarding the merits or shortcomings of literary, cinematic, or theatrical works, undergoes a morphosyntactic conversion into the adjectival form critical, which encapsulates the disposition of rendering assessments or appraisals concerning the qualities or deficiencies attributed to a particular subject or entity.

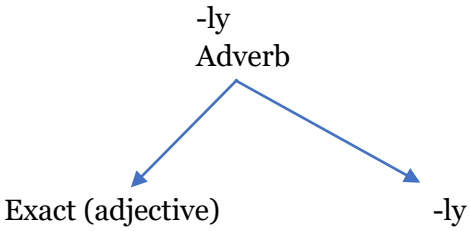
e. Verb into Adjective



The word helpless is constituted by two distinct morphemes, namely help as the base morpheme and -less as the bound morpheme. The base morpheme help belongs to the

nominal category, while -less operates as a derivational suffix. The amalgamation of help and -less exemplifies a derivational process, as evidenced by the discernible transformation in both lexical categorization and semantic properties. Specifically, the nominal form help, denoting the act of rendering assistance or providing necessities to another individual, undergoes a morphosyntactic conversion into the adjectival form helpless, which encapsulates the condition of being entirely incapacitated or deficient in the autonomy required to perform tasks independently, thereby necessitating reliance upon external assistance from others.

f. Adjective into Adverb (exactly)



Exactly is formed by two morphemes, those are exact (base morpheme), and -ly (bound morpheme). Morpheme exact is an adjective category, and -ly is a suffix. Exactly (adverb): exact (adjective) + -ly are derivational affixes when they are combined since exactly change the lexical category and the meaning. That is adjective (exact: correct in details) changes into adverb (exactly: to emphasize that something is correct in any way or in details).

4.2. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the view that derivational morphology plays a crucial role in shaping meaning and grammatical function in English literary texts. Rather than functioning merely as formal word-building devices, derivational suffixes in "How to Become a Writer" contribute to how experiences, actions, and qualities are conceptualized and represented in the narrative. This supports the theoretical perspective in morphology that derivation is closely linked to semantic expansion and lexical productivity, enabling writers to express complex ideas more economically and precisely.

The use of nominalization through derivational processes reflects a common linguistic strategy in written discourse, particularly in literary and reflective texts. By transforming processes and qualities into nominal forms, the narrative can shift focus from concrete actions to abstract experiences and internal states (Baú, 2016). This pattern aligns with the findings of Maulidina (2019), who reported that derivational forms in journalistic texts function to condense information and enhance textual cohesion. Although the genres differ, both studies indicate that derivational suffixes serve similar discourse functions across contexts, suggesting that derivation is a general strategy for managing meaning density in written English.

Furthermore, the presence of derivational suffixes that enable evaluative and descriptive expressions supports the stylistic demands of fiction writing. Literary texts require flexible lexical resources to convey attitudes, judgments, and emotional nuances. This observation is consistent with Khaerunisa's (2021) study on political speeches, which found that derivational forms contribute to the speaker's ability to shape stance and evaluation. While political discourse aims to persuade and literature aims to narrate and evoke emotion, both genres rely on derivational morphology to enrich expressive capacity. This cross-genre relevance highlights the functional importance of derivational suffixes beyond purely grammatical concerns.

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that exposure to derivational morphology through authentic literary texts can enhance learners' morphological awareness. Previous studies have emphasized that understanding word-formation processes supports

vocabulary development and reading comprehension. By encountering derivational forms in meaningful contexts, students are more likely to internalize how suffixation alters word class and meaning, which in turn facilitates independent vocabulary learning. This implication complements earlier research that examined derivational suffixes in non-literary texts, extending their relevance to literary materials commonly used in language and literature classrooms.

Finally, the focus on a short story as the data source addresses a gap in previous research that has largely centered on news texts and political speeches. Literary texts present more varied stylistic and semantic environments, allowing derivational morphology to function not only as a grammatical mechanism but also as a narrative and expressive resource. Therefore, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of derivational suffixes across genres and supports the argument that morphological analysis in literature can provide valuable insights for both linguistic theory and English language pedagogy.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that derivational suffixes play an important role in shaping meaning and grammatical function in literary texts. The analysis of Lorrie Moore's "How to Become a Writer" shows that derivational morphology contributes not only to lexical expansion but also to how experiences, evaluations, and abstract concepts are represented in narrative discourse. These findings support morphological theory that views derivation as a productive process that links form, meaning, and syntactic function in natural language use. By situating the analysis within a literary context, this research extends previous studies that have largely focused on journalistic and political texts. The presence and functions of derivational suffixes in a short story highlight that word-formation processes operate consistently across genres while also serving genre-specific communicative purposes, such as characterization and the expression of psychological states. This suggests that literary texts provide a rich and meaningful resource for examining morphological phenomena.

Pedagogically, this study implies that incorporating authentic literary materials into morphology and vocabulary instruction can enhance learners' awareness of word-formation processes and support independent vocabulary development. Understanding derivational suffixes enables students to infer meanings of unfamiliar words and recognize relationships among lexical items, which is essential for reading comprehension and academic literacy. It is acknowledged, however, that the present investigation is circumscribed by its reliance upon a single literary text, which inevitably constrains the generalizability of its findings across broader morphological patterns in English. Future research is accordingly encouraged to examine derivational suffixes across a wider corpus of literary works and to undertake comparative analyses spanning different genres, so as to yield more expansive insights into word-formation processes in English. For teaching and learning, derivational morphology should be integrated into vocabulary and reading instruction using authentic texts, such as short stories, to help students better understand word-formation processes and infer meanings of unfamiliar words. Students are also encouraged to practice identifying derivational suffixes in their reading to improve vocabulary development and comprehension.

6. References

Abdullah, S. M. (2025). *Inflectional Vs Derivational Morphemes in English*. Ministry of Higher Education.

Archibald, J., & O'Grady, W. (2008). *Contemporary linguistic analysis*. Pearson London.

Aswad, M., & Wirentake, W. (2023). Creating Inclusive Language Learning Environments: Addressing the Needs of Diverse Learners. *TRANSFORMATIONAL LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, AND TECHNOLOGY OVERVIEW IN LEARNING*, *2*(3), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.55047/transtool.v2i3.1360

Azimova, S. R. (2025). Certain theoretical views on English word-formation means. *Международный Научно-Исследовательский Журнал*, *1 (151)*, 110. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-08-2015-0072

Baú, V. (2016). A narrative approach in evaluation:"Narratives of change" method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *16*(4), 374–387. https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-08-2015-0072

Dixon, R. M. W. (2014). *Making new words: Morphological derivation in English*. Oxford University Press.

Khaerunisa, N. W., & Kheryadi, K. (2016). A Morphological Analysis of Derivational Affixes in the Video of Barack Obama's Speech. *LETS: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching Studies*, *2*(2), 2021. https://doi.org/10.46870/lets.v2i2.152

Martini, I. D. A. K. (2016). Derivational of bound morpheme. *International Research Journal of Management, IT and Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 15–22. https://sloap.org/journals/index.php/irjmis/article/view/343

Maulidina, S., Indriyani, F., & Mardewi, T. (2019). Derivational and inflectional morphemes in the Jakarta Post. *Journal of English Teaching and Research*, *4*(2), 104–122. https://doi.org/10.29407/jetar.v4i2.13625

Oatley, K. (1995). A taxonomy of the emotions of literary response and a theory of identification in fictional narrative. *Poetics*, *23*(1–2), 53–74. https://doi.org/10.1016/0304-422X(94)P4296-S

Richerson, P. J., & Christiansen, M. H. (2024). *Cultural evolution: Society, technology, language, and religion* (Vol. 12). Mit Press.