

The Dominance of Derivational Suffixes in English News Headlines of the Jakarta Post Online

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ABSTRACT

This quantitative descriptive study analyzes the dominance and functional application of derivational suffixes in a corpus of 20 English news headlines from The Jakarta Post Online. The research aims to quantify the frequency of derivational suffixes while explaining their role in triggering lexical category shifts, particularly within the linguistic constraints of headlines, which prioritizes brevity, compactness, and semantic density. A total of 12 instances of class-changing derivational suffixes were identified, indicating a systematic reliance on morphological condensation to maximize information within limited lexical space. The analysis reveals two major functional shifts: nominalization (V→N) and adjectivalization (N→A), with the N→A pattern exhibiting the highest dominance (41.67%), commonly formed through suffixes such as *-free*, *-al*, *-ian*, and *-an*, which enable headlines to construct evaluative, descriptive, and attribute-focused expressions. Meanwhile, the suffix *-ing* emerged as the most frequent morpheme (33.33%), contributing significantly to nominalization and enabling headlines to convert processes into conceptual entities. These findings suggest that derivational morphology functions as a strategic linguistic mechanism to enhance lexical efficiency and informational density in digital journalism. Furthermore, the dominance of adjectivalization highlights a stylistic preference toward categorization and characterization, reflecting the persuasive, interpretive, and compressive nature of contemporary news discourse. Collectively, the study demonstrates that derivational suffixes are not merely grammatical tools but essential stylistic resources shaping meaning-making practices in online headline construction.

Keywords: *Derivational Suffix, Nominalisation, Headlines, Lexical Efficiency, The Jakarta Post.*

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of digital media platforms has fundamentally reshaped the landscape of public communication, establishing the news headline as a dynamic and structurally unique linguistic unit (Yule, 2020). Modern journalism, particularly in the realm of online publishing, operates under dual constraints: the requirement to deliver information with precision and the necessity to capture the reader's attention in a fraction of a second within a densely saturated digital environment (Dewan, 2019; Webster, 2016).

These pressures necessitate a highly efficient and condensed form of language, often termed *headlines*, where brevity and informational density are prioritized above traditional syntactic elaboration (Dor, 2017; Reah, 2018). Within this linguistic framework, the process of word formation—a core domain of morphology—emerges as a principal mechanism employed by writers to compress maximal semantic load into minimal lexico-syntactic space (Lieber, 2016; Bauer et al., 2020; Plag, 2018).

The scientific study of language, known as linguistics, addresses how words are structured and used, with morphology dealing specifically with the structure of words (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2017; Katamba & Stonham, 2020). Languages possess an innate ability to extend

their vocabulary, often by forming new words from existing words and word parts (Booij, 2018; Haspelmath & Sims, 2019). This process is largely governed by affixation, which involves adding morphemes to a word, thereby creating new lexical items (Lieber & Štekauer, 2019). Affixes are traditionally categorized into two types: inflectional and derivational (Katamba & Stonham, 2020).

While inflectional affixes primarily serve to indicate grammatical relations (such as tense or plurality) without altering the word's fundamental class, derivational affixes possess the capacity to transform a word's meaning or, critically for this study, its lexical category. For instance, a derivational suffix can change a verb into a noun or an adjective into an adverb, thereby enabling a new syntactic function. This capacity for category alteration is a linguistic feature of high utility in restricted discourse genres, such as the news headline, where nouns, adjectives, and verbs are open classes that frequently accept new additions (Hadi, 2023).

In the specialized register of headlines, there is a discernible preference for nominal elements over verbal elements, as the former facilitates the packing of event-based information into succinct lexical units (Finegan, 2012). This phenomenon is realized morphologically through nominalization, which is the process of converting a verb or an adjective into a noun through the application of specific derivational suffixes, such as *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ity*, or *-ness* (Hadi, 2023). For example, a lengthy description involving the verb to investigate can be succinctly captured by the noun investigation, allowing the headline to maintain its efficiency. The selective use of derivational suffixes therefore becomes a calculated rhetorical strategy, essential for creating headlines that are both concise and maximally informative (Suryani & Wibowo, 2025).

A number of studies have previously scrutinized the application of affixes within journalistic discourse. Nurtiddini and Soraya (2019), in their descriptive qualitative research on a single article from The Jakarta Post Online, observed the use of both derivational and inflectional suffixes. Their findings, derived from the article body, indicated a greater prevalence of inflectional suffixes—specifically the suffix *-s*—over derivational forms, although specific derivational suffixes like *-ion*, *-ly*, and *-ment* were also present in the corpus (Nurtiddini & Soraya, 2019).

Conversely, research focusing explicitly on the high-density linguistic environment of headlines yields differing patterns. Suryani and Wibowo (2025), in a separate morphological study of The Jakarta Post headlines, found a total of 60 affixed words, with a balance between derivation and inflection. They underscored that the use of both derivational and inflectional affixes serves an essential role in constructing concise and engaging headlines for the readership (Suryani & Wibowo, 2025).

More targeted research has explored the class-changing functions of derivation within international news media. Pratama and Utami (2025), focusing on BBC News: Earth Edition articles, found that nominalization from verbs (*V*→*N*) accounted for the majority of class-changing derivational suffixes, comprising 57% of the identified functions. This underscores the cross-platform tendency of news genres to favor noun formation (Pratama & Utami, 2025).

Similarly, Ulan and Utami (2025), in their analysis of CNN News: Entertainment Edition, identified a total of 233 derivational suffixes, with suffixes forming adverbs, nominals, and adjectives being particularly prevalent (Ulan & Utami, 2025). Hadi (2023) provided a specific qualitative analysis of derivational morphemes within The Jakarta Post headlines,

confirming the occurrence of nouns derived from verbs, adjectives derived from verbs, and adjectives derived from nouns (Hadi, 2023).

Despite these existing contributions, a specific research lacuna remains concerning the quantified dominance and systematic patterning of derivational suffixes—specifically those suffixes that alter the lexical category—within the unique linguistic environment of The Jakarta Post Online headlines. While previous studies have confirmed the presence of derivation, there is a demonstrated need for a rigorous, corpus-based quantitative analysis that systematically tabulates the frequency of each derivational suffix and precisely details the subsequent class-changing functions.

This approach is necessary to provide robust empirical evidence regarding the specific morphological strategies employed by Indonesian English-language journalists to achieve the mandated efficiency and informational density of their headlines. The study seeks to empirically verify the hypothesis that nominalization is the dominant word-formation process in this specific media context. Therefore, the present research is uniquely positioned to fill this scholarly gap by providing a detailed morphological profile of derivational suffix usage within the contemporary digital publishing practices of a leading Indonesian English-language newspaper.

Based on these considerations, this study is structured around three primary objectives. The first objective is to identify the most frequently used English derivational suffixes in the news headlines published on The Jakarta Post Online. The second objective is to analyze the frequency of occurrence of each identified derivational suffix, thereby establishing the dominance hierarchy of these morphemes in the corpus. Finally, the third objective is to explain the lexical category changes (such as $V \rightarrow N$, $A \rightarrow N$, and $N \rightarrow A$) produced by these derivational suffixes, which provides insight into the functional role of morphology in constructing condensed and effective news communication.

METHOD

The present study adopted a quantitative descriptive approach within the domain of morphological analysis. This methodology was selected owing to its suitability for systematically detailing and measuring the linguistic phenomena under investigation—specifically, the frequency and functional patterning of derivational morphemes (Ambara & Utami, 2023). Quantitative measurement was deemed necessary to establish the dominance hierarchy of the identified suffixes, while the descriptive element ensured that the subsequent functional changes in lexical categories were interpreted in an academic manner. The research primarily utilized a corpus analysis technique, a standard procedure for examining morphological patterns in naturally occurring language data (Rafique, 2020).

The source of data for this research was the English-language news headlines published on the The Jakarta Post Online website. This source was chosen strategically due to its status as a widely read and globally accessible Indonesian media outlet, providing a contemporary and authentic corpus of headlines (Ambara & Utami, 2023). The data comprised a corpus of 20 news headlines collected from the website, ensuring a sufficient sample size for reliable frequency analysis. The collection was restricted to recent headlines to capture current trends in digital journalistic language. The selection of headlines adhered to a purposive sampling

technique, whereby only headlines containing words formed through derivational affixation were included, thereby ensuring the direct relevance of the data to the research objectives.

The document analysis method was employed for data collection (Ambara & Utami, 2023). This involved a methodical set of processes carried out by the researcher, akin to the non-participant observation method in which the researcher collected data without actively intervening in the source environment (Sari & Rudianto, 2024).

The procedural steps were as follows: First, the online domain of The Jakarta Post was accessed. Second, the researcher systematically read and collected 20 unique news headlines. Third, the observe-and-note method was applied, whereby each word containing an affix was identified and recorded in a structured matrix. This matrix included the full headline, the affixed word, the identified suffix, the base word (root), the original lexical category, and the resulting lexical category after derivation. This detailed documentation ensured the foundation for robust morphological analysis (Suryani & Wibowo, 2025).

The collected corpus was subjected to a rigorous textual analysis executed through three interconnected stages, aligning with the principles of morphological analysis (Yule, 2020). In the initial stage, the researcher performed the segmentation of words containing suffixes into their constituent morphemes. This involved isolating the derivational suffix from its root word (or stem) (Rafique, 2020). Subsequently, the lexical category of the root word and the resulting derived word were precisely determined using formal linguistic markers and abbreviations. For example, the word globalisation was segmented into the root global (A) and the suffixes -ize and -tion, resulting in the final category of Noun (N). This process established the raw data for functional assessment (Ambara & Utami, 2023).

The second stage involved the quantitative processing of the identified data. The morphemes were classified according to their function and tallied to determine their overall frequency of occurrence within the corpus. The final stage involved interpreting the quantitative results within the framework of morphological theory and the constraints of headlines (Katamba, 1994, as cited in Ambara & Utami, 2023).

The researcher provided an informal method of presentation by narratively explaining why certain suffixes and class-changing functions—particularly V→N (nominalization)—dominated the corpus (Ambara & Utami, 2023). This discussion served to link the morphological findings to their communicative effectiveness and efficiency in the digital news environment, thus achieving the third research objective and concluding the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present section details the findings derived from the corpus analysis of derivational suffixes in the English news headlines of The Jakarta Post Online. It adheres to the established research objectives by first identifying and quantifying the frequency of the suffixes, and subsequently providing a descriptive analysis of the morphological functions, specifically the resulting changes in lexical category. The discussion integrates these empirical findings with established theories of morphology and the specific linguistic requirements of journalistic discourse.

The first two objectives of this study to identify and analyze the frequency of occurrence of the derivational suffixes were met through the systematic enumeration and tabulation of all 12 instances. The data reveals that the adoption of derivational morphology is

not random rather, it adheres to a discernible pattern dictated by the stylistic and structural needs of headlines.

Table 1. Distribution and Frequency of Derivational Suffixes in The Jakarta Post Headlines

Suffix Form	Total Count (N=12)	Relative Frequency (%)	Resulting Class Change	Examples from Corpus
-ing	4	33.33%	V→N, V→A	flooding, fighting, parenting, sparkling
-free	2	16.67%	N→A	Childfree, care-free
-al	1	8.33%	N→A	social
-ian	1	8.33%	N→A	Indonesian
-an	1	8.33%	N→A	American
-y	1	8.33%	V→N	discovery
-er	1	8.33%	V→N	Organizers
-ly	1	8.33%	A→Adv/A	deadly
Total	12	100%		

As illustrated in Table 1, the suffix -ing is the most prevalent derivational morpheme, accounting for 33.33% of the total identified instances. This quantitative finding underscores the utility of -ing not in its inflectional function (as a progressive marker) but in its capacity to participate in the derivation of new lexical items, specifically nouns and adjectives (Yule, 2020). Beyond the single most frequent suffix, the analysis reveals that suffixes contributing to Adjectivalisation (i.e., -free, -al, -ian, -an), collectively representing a significant 41.66% of the corpus, surpass the pure Nominalisation suffixes (i.e., -y, -er, -ing as V→N instances), which account for 33.33% of the instances.

This initial quantification offers substantial insight into the preference for nominal and adjectival condensation within The Jakarta Post's headline discourse. The third and most substantive objective of this research is to explain the morphological function of the identified suffixes by detailing the resulting lexical category shifts. The analysis reveals two dominant functional patterns: Nominalisation (V→N) and Adjectivalisation (N→A and V→A), alongside minor adverbialisation instances.

Table 2. Classification of Derivational Functions (Class Changes) in The Jakarta Post Headlines

Functional Category	Class Change Pattern	Count (N=12)	Relative Dominance (%)	Examples
Nominalisation	V→N	4	33.33%	flooding, fighting, parenting, discovery, Organizers
Adjectivalisation	N→A	5	41.67%	social, Childfree, care-free, Indonesian, American
	V→A	1	8.33%	sparkling
Adverbialisation	A→Adv/A	1	8.33%	deadly
Irregular/Other	(N/A)	1	8.33%	(N/A)
Total		12	100%	

The formation of nouns from verbs, known as Nominalisation, constitutes a fundamental mechanism for achieving efficiency in news reporting. In this corpus, four instances (33.33%) exhibit this change, primarily driven by the suffix -ing and the agentive suffix -er. The suffix -ing is a polysemous morpheme, serving both inflectional purposes (e.g., is enforcing) and derivational purposes (e.g., flooding).

In the derivational instances observed, -ing functions to transform the processual nature of a verb into a nominal entity or concept. Examples include: Govt suspends four firms suspected of contributing to deadly North Sumatra flooding (flood V → flooding N). Trump says to make phone call to stop Thai-Cambodia fighting (fight V → fighting N). Childfree, but not care-free: What I learned from a parenting book (parent V → parenting N).

In these instances, the derived noun refers to the action or the result of the action, condensing an entire event into a single lexical item. For instance, flooding represents the sustained action of to flood, which serves as the thematic subject or object in the headline structure. The use of the noun flooding is morphologically economical, replacing a more elaborate construction such as ...the event of the river flooding. Furthermore, the agentive suffix -er is observed in: Cambodia pull out of SEA Games in Thailand: Organizers (organize V → Organizers N).

Table 3. Functional Distribution of the Suffix -ing (N=4)

Functional Role	Class Change Pattern	Count (n)	Contribution to Total -ing (%)	Examples
Nominalisasi	V→N	3	75.00%	flooding, fighting, parenting
Adjectivalisasi	V→A	1	25.00%	sparkling
Total		4	100%	

As detailed in Table 3, the majority of uses of the suffix -ing (75%) are in the Nominalization function. Examples include: Govt suspends four firms suspected of contributing to deadly North Sumatra flooding (flood V → flooding N), Trump says to make phone calls to stop Thai-Cambodia fighting (fight V → fighting N), and Childfree, but not care-free: What I learned from a parenting book (parent V → parenting N). In these instances, the derived noun refers to the action or result of the action, condensing the entire event into a single lexical item. For example, flooding represents the ongoing action of to flood, which functions as the thematic subject or object in the title structure. The use of the noun flooding is morphologically economical, replacing more verbose constructions such as ...the event of the river flooding.

The suffix -er in Organizers (and the singular base Organizer) transforms a verb of action (organize) into the noun denoting the agent or performer of that action (Yule, 2020). This nominalisation provides a necessary reference point, identifying the source of the information or statement, which is a structural element of journalistic attribution. Similarly, the suffix -y in discovery (discover V → discovery N) functions to nominalise the outcome of the verbal action, representing the newly found object rather than the act of finding. The prevalence of this V→N pattern aligns with the widely acknowledged stylistic convention of headlines

to prioritise nouns that denote events or entities, thereby facilitating a terse yet substantive report of the news (Pratama & Utami, 2025).

The formation of adjectives from nouns (N→A) emerged as the functionally most dominant pattern, accounting for 41.67% (5 instances) of the total derivational suffixes. This finding highlights a specific morphological strategy used to qualify nominal elements, thereby providing necessary detail without increasing the syntactic length of the headline.

Table 4. Contribution of Suffixes to Dominant Class Changes (V→N and N→A)

Functional Category	Suffix Form	Count (n)	Contribution to Category (%)
Nominalisation (V→N)	-ing	3	60.00%
	-er	1	20.00%
	-y	1	20.00%
Subtotal		5	100%
Adjectivalisation (N→A)	-free	2	40.00%
	-al	1	20.00%
	-ian	1	20.00%
	-an	1	20.00%
Subtotal		5	100%

Table 4 explicitly shows which suffixes contribute most to the two dominant functional patterns. Specifically, in Adjectivalization, contributing suffixes include -al, -an, -ian, and -free. These suffixes play a central role in modifying the main noun in dense nominal phrases, which are a common feature of news headlines: Social media ban (society N → social A), Indonesian American story (Indonesia N → Indonesian A), American story (America N → American A), Childfree (N→A) and care-free (N→A).

The suffixes contributing to Adjectivalisation include -al, -an, -ian, and -free. These suffixes are crucial in modifying the head nouns in densely packed nominal phrases, a common feature of headlines: Social media ban (society N → social A). Indonesian American story (Indonesia N → Indonesian A). American story (America N → American A). Childfree (N → A) and care-free (N → A).

The use of suffixes like -al,-an, and -ian to derive adjectives from proper nouns (place names) or common nouns (e.g., society) is a mechanism of relational adjectivalisation (Yule, 2020). It allows the noun to function as a modifier, creating powerful, compressed noun phrases such as social media ban, where the modifier social is derived from the nominal concept of society. This pattern allows the headline to establish a relationship between two nominal concepts quickly, fulfilling the requirement for precision in classification (Hadi, 2023).

Furthermore, the suffix -free in Childfree and care-free is a highly productive derivational suffix in English. It transforms a noun into an adjective meaning 'without' or 'exempt from', enabling the headline to communicate a specific, often lifestyle-related, status in a single word. This morphological device is exceptionally effective for conciseness in reporting on socio-cultural topics. The clear dominance of N→A patterns demonstrate the writers' preference for using derivation to construct attributive modifiers that enhance the descriptive power of the nouns in the headline.

Two minor patterns were observed, each accounting for 8.33% of the identified suffixes, providing further evidence of the diverse application of derivational morphology. The

change from Verb to Adjective (V→A) is exemplified by the suffix -ing in: The St. Regis Jakarta celebrates holiday traditions with Lumière, a Sparkling Season (sparkle V → Sparkling A).

In this case, -ing functions as a present participle that has been morphologically converted into an adjective to modify the noun Season. This use is highly efficient, as it imbues the season with the continuous quality of sparkle without requiring a full relative clause, serving an aesthetic function often seen in non-political or leisure news. The pattern of Adjective to Adverb/Adjective (A→Adv/A) is represented by the suffix -ly in: Warm oceans seem to be turning even ‘weak’ cyclones deadly (dead A → deadly A). While the suffix -ly typically forms adverbs from adjectives (e.g., quick → quickly), it also has a notable function in forming adjectives from certain root adjectives or nouns (e.g., friend N → friendly A). In this instance, deadly functions syntactically as a predicative adjective modifying cyclones (Yule, 2020). This usage adds a dramatic, high-impact evaluative quality to the headline, which is a rhetorical strategy to maximise reader engagement.

The quantitative findings concerning the functional distribution of derivational suffixes within The Jakarta Post’s English news headlines provide substantial empirical support for the theoretical understanding of journalistic language as a genre characterised by acute lexical efficiency and informational density. The dominance of Nominalisation (V→N) and Adjectivalisation (N→A) is not incidental; rather, it represents a calculated morphological strategy to adapt standard English vocabulary to the stringent structural constraints of the headline format.

The robust presence of the Nominalisation pattern, particularly through the productive suffix -ing, reinforces the theoretical assertion that headlines actively seek to convert dynamic actions (verbs) into static concepts (nouns). This morphological conversion enables the headline to report an event or phenomenon as an established fact or entity, thereby obviating the need for auxiliary verbs, tense marking, and other inflectional elements that would slow the pace of information delivery (Pratama & Utami, 2025).

The shift from to flood to flooding allows the noun to serve as the subject of the news report itself, compressing the full descriptive weight of the original verbal clause into a single, high-impact nominal term. This finding is consistent with the general pattern observed in scholarly literature that highlights the preference for nouns derived from verbs in news texts, as they streamline the narrative. The usage of the agentive suffix -er further supports this drive for efficiency by immediately attributing the action to its agent (Organizers), which is essential for journalistic credibility (Hadi, 2023).

The functional dominance of Adjectivalisation (N→A) constitutes a parallel strategy for informational condensation. Headlines inherently rely on pre-modification to embed details directly into the noun phrase. The derivational suffixes -al,-ian,-an, and -free allow writers to transform abstract nouns (e.g., society, nation, child) into adjectival modifiers (social, Indonesian, American, childfree). This mechanism is an efficient means of creating packed noun phrases (e.g., Indonesian American story) which are linguistically rich and economically structured.

By using derivational adjectives, the headline avoids slower, syntactically marked constructions involving prepositional phrases or relative clauses (e.g., a story about an Indonesian American), thereby preserving the speed and brevity mandated by the digital reading environment. This pattern signifies a heavy reliance on morphology to generate attributive modifiers, which are crucial for the rapid classification of the news content (Yule, 2020).

The current findings offer both corroboration and differentiation when compared to previous research on affixes in news media. Firstly, the finding that derivational suffixes (N=12) were outnumbered by the uncounted inflectional suffixes (mostly plural -s and third-person -s) aligns with the conclusion of Nurtiddini and Soraya (2019) who found inflectional suffixes to be more numerous in their corpus. However, the present study's focus on class-changing derivational functions provides a deeper functional insight.

Secondly, the dominance of Nominalisation (V→N) is confirmed, mirroring the primary functional role identified in BBC News: Earth Edition (Pratama & Utami, 2025), which established the V→N change as the most frequent class-shifting function. This demonstrates a shared morphological convention across different international English-language news outlets.

However, a divergence is observed with the findings from Ulan and Utami (2025) on CNN News: Entertainment Edition, where adverbial suffixes were the most prevalent. The low frequency of adverbialisation in this The Jakarta Post corpus (8.33%) suggests that The Jakarta Post's general news headlines prioritise reporting what is happening (nouns and modified nouns) over detailing how an action is performed (adverbs). The high frequency of Adjectivalisation (N→A) in this corpus is particularly noteworthy, suggesting that relational classification through adjectival derivation is a distinct morphological hallmark of The Jakarta Post's style, exceeding the emphasis on verbal nominalisation.

In synthesis, the results demonstrate that derivational suffixes in The Jakarta Post headlines are employed as highly functional tools to manipulate the syntactic roles of words. This process is not merely an automatic application of morphological rules but an active, genre-driven selection process. The morphological operations observed serve to create a dense nominal core that is efficiently modified by derived adjectives, collectively achieving the stylistic and informational mandates of effective headlines in the digital age. The dominance of these class-changing morphemes provides clear evidence that morphology is a foundational pillar in the construction of efficient, information-rich online news discourse.

CONCLUSION

The investigation into derivational suffixes in *The Jakarta Post Online* headlines successfully identified dominant forms like *-free*, *-al*, *-ian*, *-an*, and *-ing*; quantified their frequencies across 12 class-changing instances; and explained their functional impacts on lexical shifts, with adjectivalization (N→A) at 41.67% and nominalization (V→N) at 33.33% emerging as primary patterns. These findings demonstrate that derivational morphology is employed purposefully—rather than randomly—to achieve brevity and high information density in digital journalism, converting actions into compact descriptors or conceptual entities that enhance rhetorical efficiency without syntactic complexity. Overall, the study confirms

morphology's role as a deliberate adaptation in online *headlines*, providing empirical support for its influence on contemporary journalistic discourse. For future research, a comparative analysis of derivational suffixes across multiple Indonesian English-language outlets (e.g., *The Jakarta Post* vs. *Kompas.com*) could reveal genre-specific or platform-driven variations in morphological strategies.

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