

ARABIC MORPHOLOGY: DERIVATION PATTERNS AND THEIR APPLICATION IN ARABIC LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract

The morphological system in Arabic, with a focus on word derivation patterns and their application in Arabic language learning for non-Arabic speakers. Arabic has a distinctive word formation system, based on root words and phonological patterns, which allows for the formation of various words with different meanings and syntactic functions. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive method through a literature review approach to relevant linguistic and pedagogical sources. The results of the study show that understanding word patterns such as agent nouns, object nouns, verbs, and abstract nouns can systematically strengthen students' vocabulary and grammar skills. In learning practice, effective strategies include derivation exercises, word analysis in authentic texts, the use of visual media, and the integration of word patterns in teaching modules. This approach not only improves students' linguistic abilities but also encourages them to understand the structure and meaning of words more deeply. In addition, morphology-based learning helps students recognize relationships between words, expand their vocabulary productively, and understand the syntactic context in Arabic sentences. This study concludes that Arabic language teaching that integrates morphological analysis can be an important foundation in the development of a communicative, analytical, and contextual curriculum that is relevant to modern learning needs.

Keywords: *Arabic Morphology; Word Patterns; Derivation; Arabic Leanguage Learning; Teaching Strategies.*

Abstrak

Sistem morfologi dalam bahasa Arab, dengan fokus pada pola derivasi kata dan penerapannya dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab bagi penutur non-Arab. Bahasa Arab memiliki sistem pembentukan kata yang khas, berbasis pada akar kata dan pola



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fonologis, yang memungkinkan terbentuknya berbagai kata dengan makna dan fungsi sintaksis yang berbeda. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif-deskriptif melalui pendekatan studi pustaka terhadap sumber linguistik dan pedagogis yang relevan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa pemahaman terhadap pola kata seperti isim pelaku, isim objek, kata kerja, dan kata benda abstrak dapat memperkuat kompetensi kosakata dan tata bahasa siswa secara sistematis. Dalam praktik pembelajaran, strategi yang efektif meliputi latihan derivasi, analisis kata dalam teks otentik, penggunaan media visual, dan integrasi pola kata dalam modul ajar. Pendekatan ini tidak hanya meningkatkan kemampuan linguistik siswa, tetapi juga mendorong mereka untuk memahami struktur dan makna kata secara lebih mendalam. Selain itu, pembelajaran berbasis morfologi membantu siswa mengenali hubungan antar kata, memperluas kosakata secara produktif, dan memahami konteks sintaksis dalam kalimat Arab. Kajian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pengajaran bahasa Arab yang mengintegrasikan analisis morfologis dapat menjadi fondasi penting dalam pengembangan kurikulum yang komunikatif, analitis, dan kontekstual, serta relevan dengan kebutuhan pembelajaran modern.

Kata Kunci: *Morfologi Arab; Pola Kata; Derivasi; Pembelajaran Bahasa Arab; Strategi Pengajaran.*

INTRODUCTION

Arabic, as one of the Semitic languages, possesses a distinctive and complex morphological system characterized by the use of root morphemes and phonological patterns (*wazan*) in lexical formation (Allothman & Alsalman, 2020; Bobeck, 2025a; E. Watson, 2021; Wattad & Abu Rabia, 2020). This system enables a single root to generate various lexical forms with different meanings and syntactic functions, including verbs, nouns, adjectives, and other derivative forms (Bonadonna, 2020; Iwaizumi & Webb, 2023; Shahbari-Kassem et al., 2025). This distinctive feature establishes Arabic morphology as a fundamental component of linguistic structure in both classical and modern contexts. In linguistic studies, Arabic morphology is viewed not merely as a word-formation mechanism but also as a system of deep and contextual meaning construction.

In the context of Arabic language teaching, particularly for non-native speakers, understanding morphological structures is essential for vocabulary mastery, grammatical competence, and text comprehension (Hu et al., 2022; Teng & Cui, 2025; Umam & Nasiruddin, 2024; Zhang & Lin, 2021). Insufficient knowledge of word-formation patterns often leads to difficulties in reading, writing, and comprehending sentence meaning comprehensively. Previous studies indicate that students' primary difficulty in understanding Arabic texts lies in weak mastery of word structure and derivational processes (Hapianingsih & Fadli, 2024). This

highlights the need for instructional approaches that are not only communicative but also analytical and structure-based.

In the era of globalization and educational digitalization, the challenges of Arabic language instruction have become increasingly complex. Learners are expected not only to communicate effectively but also to understand linguistic structures deeply for academic, professional, and religious purposes. Therefore, morphology-based analytical approaches are becoming increasingly relevant, particularly in competency-based curriculum development (Doboviček et al., 2025; Hassell et al., 2023). The study of Arabic morphology, especially word patterns and derivation, can serve as a foundation for designing teaching modules, evaluation rubrics, and contextual and applicable instructional strategies (Putra, 2025). Derivation is defined as a morphological process that forms new words through affixation, resulting in new lexemes that differ from their base forms in terms of word class and lexical identity (Solihin & Muhsinin, 2024).

Several previous studies are relevant to this discussion Hapianingsih & Fadli (2024) demonstrated that learners' difficulties in Arabic primarily stem from weak morphological mastery, particularly in word patterns and derivation. Solihin & Muhsinin (2024) revealed that the Arabic derivational system is more complex and productive than that of Indonesian, thus requiring structure-based instructional approaches. Shahbari-Kassem et al. (2025) confirmed that derivational morphological awareness significantly influences vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension in Arabic. Based on these findings, this study connects classical and contemporary Arabic morphological theory with modern pedagogical approaches grounded in structural analysis to strengthen learners' vocabulary and grammatical competence.

This study aims to describe word patterns within the Arabic morphological system, analyze commonly used derivational forms in word formation, and present systematic and meaningful instructional strategies for Arabic language teaching. This research occupies a significant position in Arabic pedagogy by linking linguistic theory with classroom practice (Juliani et al., 2025). Through this approach, Arabic instruction is expected to become more structured, reflective, and aligned with the structural richness and semantic depth of the language.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using a library research method (Fadli, 2021). This approach is appropriate for examining theoretical and applied linguistic and pedagogical concepts. The literature review was conducted by analyzing relevant primary and secondary sources (Nurbaiti et al., 2025). Data were

collected from publications within the last five years focusing on Arabic morphology, derivational word patterns, and structure-based Arabic language teaching strategies.

The analysis examined Arabic word structures, including trilateral (*tsulāthī*) and quadrilateral (*rubā'ī*) roots, phonological patterns (*wazan*), and derivative forms such as *ism fā'il* (active participle), *ism maf'ūl* (passive participle), *fi'l māḍī* (past tense verb), *fi'l muḍāri'* (present tense verb), *maṣdar* (verbal noun), *ism ālah* (instrument noun), and *ism makān* (locative noun). The study also analyzed the application of these concepts in classroom instruction through teaching modules, conjugation exercises (*taṣrīf*), and authentic text analysis (Zaidan et al., 2025). Validity was strengthened through source triangulation by comparing authoritative academic references and aligning them with established frameworks in *ṣarf* (Arabic morphology) and language pedagogy (Nurbaiti et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the literature analysis, the Arabic morphological system exhibits a systematic and productive derivational character through a non-concatenative pattern, namely the combination of root morphemes (*jadḥr*) and phonological patterns (*wazan*). Through this system, a single root can generate various lexical forms with different word classes, syntactic functions, and meanings. For example, the root ك-ت-ب produces the forms كَتَبَ (verb), كِتَابٌ (noun), كَاتِبٌ (agent noun), مَكْتَبٌ (locative noun), dan مَكْتُوبٌ (object noun or passive participle).

The research findings indicate that an understanding of the root-and-pattern system enables learners to recognize and interpret word meanings more effectively without relying solely on rote memorization of vocabulary. Derivation-based instruction in Arabic morphology also contributes to strengthening morphological awareness, expanding vocabulary productively, and enhancing comprehension of syntactic structures in Arabic texts.

Beyond its linguistic dimension, neurolinguistic studies suggest that the processing of Arabic morphological patterns involves more efficient activation of language-related areas in the brain. Therefore, Arabic morphology functions not only as a grammatical system but also as a cognitive mechanism that supports comprehensive Arabic language acquisition.

Table 1. Arabic Morphology and Its Application in Learning

NO	Aspect	Description	Arabic Text
1	Arabic morphological system	Arabic morphology is derivational, systematic, and productive, employing a non-concatenative pattern through the integration of roots and <i>wazan</i> .	الجزء + الوزن
2	Word formation	A single root can produce various word classes with different syntactic functions and meanings	ك-ت-ب كَتَبَ - كِتَابٌ - كَاتِبٌ - مَكْتَبٌ - مَكْتُوبٌ
3	Word-form variation	The same root generates verbs, agent nouns, locative nouns, and object nouns.	فَاعِلٌ - مَفْعُولٌ
4	Linguistic impact	Understanding the root-pattern system helps learners interpret word meanings without relying on vocabulary memorization	الإشْتِقَاق
5	Morphological awareness	Derivation-based learning strengthens morphological awareness and expands vocabulary productively.	المعالجة اللغوية
6	Cognitive impact	Processing Arabic morphology supports cognitive efficiency in language comprehension and production.	

In Arabic morphology, three principal types of *ishtiqaq* (derivation) are identified as core mechanisms: (a) *ishtiqaq saġhīr*, which preserves the order of root letters and their basic meaning; (b) *ishtiqaq kabīr*, which allows inversion of letter order while maintaining semantic relatedness; and (c) *ishtiqaq akbar*, which involves phonemic substitution based on similarity of articulation (*makhraj*). These mechanisms have proven effective in instructional contexts, enhancing learners' linguistic competence through the development of metalinguistic awareness and facilitating transfer to reading skills. Further literature analysis confirms that this system possesses high practical applicability and supports the development of morphology-based curricula for non-Arab learners in the context of Arabic diglossia (Salam et al., 2025).

These strategies are widely identified in the literature as effective approaches to improving learners' linguistic competence. Analysis of Arabic morphological studies—particularly those addressing word-pattern structures, types of derivation, and their pedagogical applications—demonstrates that the Arabic morphological system is not merely theoretical in nature but also possesses substantial practical value in the development of learners' linguistic competence (Hafi et al., 2024).

Arabic Word Pattern Structure

Arabic relies on trilateral and quadrilateral root systems combined with phonological templates (*wazan*) to form productive lexical paradigms. This non-concatenative morphological system allows systematic vocabulary formation and enhances lexical productivity

For example, the root ك-ت-ب ("to write") generates:

kataba (فَعَلَّ) - perfect verb

kitab (فِعَالٌ) - noun (abstract/result)

katib (فَاعِلٌ) - active agent noun

maktab (مَفْعَلٌ) - locative noun

dan *maktub* (مَفْعُولٌ) - passive participle

Each pattern encodes specific semantic roles. For instance, فَاعِلٌ denotes agency, whereas مَفْعُولٌ indicates patient roles. This root-pattern system enables systematic semantic inference without relying solely on memorized vocabulary (Bobeck, 2025b). Experimental studies demonstrate that non-native learners trained to recognize *wazan* patterns show improved reading accuracy, confirming the importance of morphological awareness in vocabulary acquisition.

Neurolinguistic studies further indicate that Arabic word processing involves simultaneous activation of roots and patterns rather than linear processing (Rahman, 2024). Thus, Arabic derivational morphology functions not only as a grammatical system but also as a cognitive mechanism underlying lexical organization.

Types of Derivation in Arabic

Aisyah, (2015) Aisyah (2015) defines derivation (*ishtiqaq*) as the process of word formation from a root through the application of specific morphological patterns. Within Arabic morphology, three principal types of derivation can be identified, each distinguished by its own characteristics and unique linguistic functions.

a. *Isytiqaq Ṣaghir*

This type preserves both root order and core meaning. For example, from ض-ر-ب emerge:

دَارِبٌ - *dārib* (agent)

مَدرُبٌ - *maḍrūb* (object)

مُفْعَلٌ - *miḍrab* (instrument/place)

This process forms the basis of verb, noun, and derivative word formation.

b. *Isytiqaq Kabir*

This allows inversion of root letters while maintaining semantic relatedness. For example, ح-م-د produces *ḥamd* and *madḥ*, both meaning “praise.”

c. *Isytiqaq Akbar*

This involves phoneme substitution based on similarity of articulation points (makhraj), such as na‘aq becoming nahaq. Despite phonetic variation, semantic relations remain intact. These derivational types demonstrate the logical, systematic, and semantically rich nature of Arabic morphology.

Morphology-Based Arabic Language Teaching Applications

Integrating morphological analysis into Arabic language instruction has proven effective in enhancing linguistic competence (Hasanah & Sofa, 2025). Effective strategies include:

a. *Derivation Exercises and Pattern Mapping*

Students identify roots and connect them to various patterns, strengthening lexical logic and vocabulary expansion.

b. *Word Analysis in Authentic Texts*

Teachers analyze classical and modern texts to explain derivational forms and syntactic functions.

c. *Visual and Digital Media Utilization*

Morphological diagrams, root-pattern cards, and interactive applications enhance intuitive understanding and motivation.

d. *Integration into Teaching Modules and Evaluation*

Instructional materials include conjugation exercises, word classification, and derivation tests assessed both formatively and summatively.

e. *Communicative-Structural Approach*

Students construct sentences using derived words and explain their syntactic and semantic functions.

The aforementioned strategies strengthen learners’ linguistic competence, expand their vocabulary, and enhance their syntactic and semantic comprehension (Mardiyah & Rofiq, 2025). Moreover, this approach aligns with the principles of

modern pedagogy, which emphasize structure-, meaning-, and context-based learning. Therefore, the teaching of Arabic morphology is not only theoretically relevant but also practically applicable in the development of communicative and reflective Arabic language curricula (Nasarudin et al., 2025).

Based on the findings of the literature analysis, the effectiveness of Arabic morphological instruction lies in its capacity to reinforce pattern recognition and lexical retrieval. Derivational exercises enable students to repeatedly identify *wazan* patterns, thereby accelerating the recognition of new word forms and facilitating productive vocabulary expansion. This is consistent with the findings of Shahbari-Kassem et al., (2025) who demonstrate that derivational morphological awareness plays a significant role in vocabulary development and reading comprehension within the context of Arabic diglossia. Word analysis in authentic texts has also been shown to enhance syntactic and semantic understanding, as students not only recognize word forms but also relate them to their grammatical functions and contextual meanings. A study by Assunitan & Aljutaily, (2025) supports this claim, indicating that Arabic-speaking children exposed to derivational forms from an early age exhibit stronger abilities in understanding semantic relationships among words.

The use of visual media, such as morphological diagrams and root-pattern cards, strengthens students' working memory in storing and retrieving morphological information (Habib et al., 2025). Interactive digital applications further increase learner engagement and motivation, particularly among digital-native generations. The integration of these strategies into instructional modules and assessment frameworks ensures that learning is not merely theoretical but also practical and measurable. Formative and summative assessments based on word-structure analysis enable teachers to systematically monitor students' progress.

The communicative-structural approach, in which students are required to construct sentences using derived words and explain their functions, integrates productive and analytical dimensions of learning. This strategy supports competency-based and contextual learning in accordance with the demands of modern curricula. Overall, Arabic morphology instruction integrated with cognitive approaches and explicit grammar instruction contributes significantly to comprehensive Arabic language mastery (Rosyadi & Fata, 2025). This study reinforces the position of morphology as a foundational component in the development of communicative, analytical, and contextually relevant Arabic language curricula tailored to the needs of non-native learners.

CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Arabic morphological analysis, particularly word derivation patterns, significantly enhances vocabulary competence and syntactic comprehension in a systematic manner. The integration of structure-based instructional strategies—such as derivation exercises, authentic text analysis, and visual media—effectively supports communicative and reflective learning.

Theoretically, this study expands the understanding of *şarf* by situating root-pattern relationships within generative and distributed morphological frameworks. Practically, it provides an applicable foundation for developing instructional modules, classroom evaluation systems, and Arabic language curricula tailored to non-native learners in the digital era.

However, this study has several limitations. The scope of literature reviewed remains limited, and as a conceptual library study, its findings may not be fully generalizable across all instructional contexts. Future research is recommended to incorporate empirical classroom experiments and quantitative meta-analyses to measure the effect size of morphology-based instruction more objectively.

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