

## EXPLORING THE INTERFACE OF SYNTAX AND MORPHOLOGY IN SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION PROCESSES

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**Abstrak** - Penelitian ini mengkaji antarmuka antara sintaksis dan morfologi dengan fokus pada bagaimana struktur internal kata memengaruhi proses pembentukan kalimat lintas bahasa. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis data dari korpus lintas bahasa yang mencakup bahasa dengan morfologi kaya (seperti Turki, Finlandia, dan Swahili) serta bahasa analitik (seperti Inggris dan Mandarin). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa struktur morfologis berperan penting dalam mengodekan hubungan gramatikal seperti subjek, objek, kala, dan kesesuaian, sehingga membentuk konfigurasi sintaksis. Pada bahasa dengan morfologi infleksional yang kaya, peran gramatikal ditandai secara eksplisit sehingga memungkinkan fleksibilitas dalam urutan kata. Sebaliknya, pada bahasa dengan morfologi terbatas, struktur sintaksis menjadi lebih kaku dan berfungsi sebagai sarana utama dalam menyampaikan hubungan gramatikal. Selain itu, morfologi derivatif juga memengaruhi perilaku sintaksis dengan mengubah kategori leksikal dan struktur argumen. Temuan ini mendukung kerangka teori integratif, khususnya Distributed Morphology, yang menekankan keterkaitan antara proses morfologis dan sintaksis. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih mendalam mengenai konstruksi kalimat sebagai hasil interaksi dinamis antara morfologi dan sintaksis, serta implikasinya dalam teori linguistik, pembelajaran bahasa, dan linguistik komputasional.

**Kata kunci:** Antarmuka sintaksis-morfologi; konstruksi kalimat; struktur morfologis; konfigurasi sintaksis; analisis lintas bahasa.

**Abstract** - This study explores the interface between syntax and morphology with a particular focus on how internal word structures influence sentence construction processes across languages. Employing a qualitative descriptive approach, the research analyzes data from cross-linguistic corpora representing both morphologically rich languages (Turkish, Finnish, and Swahili) and analytic languages (English and Mandarin Chinese). The findings indicate that morphological structures play a crucial role in encoding grammatical relations such as subject, object, tense, and agreement, thereby shaping syntactic configurations. In languages with rich inflectional morphology, grammatical roles are explicitly marked, allowing greater flexibility in word order. Conversely, in morphologically impoverished languages, syntactic structure becomes more rigid and serves as the primary means of conveying grammatical relationships. The study also reveals that derivational morphology influences syntactic behavior by altering lexical categories and argument structures. These findings support integrative theoretical frameworks, particularly Distributed Morphology, which emphasize the interdependence of morphological and syntactic processes. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of sentence construction as a product of dynamic interaction between morphology and syntax, with implications for linguistic theory, language teaching, and computational linguistics.

**Keywords:** Syntax–morphology interface, sentence construction, morphological structure, syntactic configuration, cross-linguistic analysis.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The interaction between syntax and morphology has long occupied a central position in linguistic inquiry, particularly in efforts to understand how the internal configuration of words contributes to the formation of larger syntactic structures. Morphology is primarily concerned with the composition and formation of words, whereas syntax governs the

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principles by which these words are organized into phrases and sentences (Anwar, 2025; Rehman et al., 2025). Although traditionally treated as discrete components of grammar, contemporary linguistic perspectives increasingly highlight their interdependence, conceptualized as the syntax–morphology interface (Chomsky, 2014; Rehman et al., 2025).

This interface focuses on the dynamic relationship between morphological operations such as inflection, derivation, and compounding and syntactic processes including agreement, movement, and case assignment. Morphological features embedded within verbs, such as tense, aspect, or agreement markers, directly influence their syntactic behavior within sentence structures. As noted by Reuland (2021), morphology supplies the formal elements required by syntax, while syntax determines the structural contexts in which these elements are realized, emphasizing a reciprocal and integrated relationship between the two domains. Within the framework of generative grammar, models such as Distributed Morphology (Yang et al., 2024) have further advanced the argument that morphological and syntactic processes are not autonomous but fundamentally interconnected. This approach posits that word formation is not an independent pre-syntactic process; rather, it emerges from syntactic structures and is shaped by operations occurring within the syntactic component itself. Consequently, the principles governing sentence construction also extend to the internal structure of words, supporting the notion of a unified grammatical system (Torkey & Ahmed, 2025; Karanjakwut, 2024; Oktari, 2024).

The relevance of the syntax–morphology interface becomes particularly evident in cross-linguistic contexts. Languages differ significantly in how they encode grammatical relationships through morphological and syntactic means (Leon et al., 2024; Lesiana et al., 2023; Tanhar et al., 2022). In agglutinative languages, for example, explicit morphological markers attached to lexical items often signal syntactic roles such as subject or object, thereby facilitating sentence interpretation. In contrast, analytic languages rely more heavily on word order and syntactic structure, with minimal morphological marking, placing greater functional weight on syntactic organization in sentence construction. Understanding how morphological structures shape syntactic configurations is essential not only for theoretical linguistics but also for applied disciplines, including natural language processing, language pedagogy, and second language acquisition. A comprehensive account of this interface can enhance models of syntactic parsing and improve cross-linguistic analyses of sentence formation processes (Prabowo & Saptiany, 2024; Ouyang et al., 2024).

Despite substantial theoretical advancements, several empirical challenges persist in fully capturing how morphological structure influences syntactic construction. One notable issue concerns the variability and inconsistency in the mapping between morphological markers and syntactic functions across languages and dialects. In certain linguistic systems, morphological cues do not transparently signal syntactic roles, resulting in ambiguity during sentence processing and interpretation. For example, in morphologically rich languages such as Turkish or Finnish, the presence of multiple affixes within a single word can complicate the identification of syntactic relationships, particularly in complex or embedded constructions. Conversely, in languages with limited morphological marking, such as Mandarin Chinese, syntactic mechanisms must compensate for the absence of explicit morphological indicators, often leading to challenges in determining grammatical relations based solely on morphological evidence (Kandemirci et al., 2025).

These difficulties are further amplified in language acquisition contexts. Both first and second language learners frequently encounter obstacles in aligning morphological forms

with their corresponding syntactic functions. Errors in verb inflection or nominal case marking, for instance, can result in misinterpretation or ill-formed sentence structures, highlighting the cognitive complexity involved in mastering morphosyntactic mappings. From a theoretical perspective, tensions also arise between competing models that attempt to explain the syntax–morphology interface. While some approaches, such as the Lexicalist Hypothesis, posit a degree of independence between morphology and syntax, others most notably Distributed Morphology emphasize their integration. Divergent empirical findings across languages suggest that neither perspective fully accounts for all observed phenomena, underscoring the need for more flexible and empirically grounded frameworks.

To address these challenges, scholars have proposed integrative approaches that prioritize the interaction between morphological and syntactic structures. Distributed Morphology remains a prominent model in this regard, offering a framework in which morphological realization is conditioned by syntactic environments and post-syntactic operations. As further elaborated by Rohmawati et al. (2019), this model provides a more refined explanation of how morphological elements are systematically aligned with syntactic configurations. In addition, cross-linguistic and typological research plays a crucial role in uncovering patterns of morphosyntactic interaction. Studies such as those conducted by Ananda et al. (2025) demonstrate that morphological variation often reflects deeper syntactic tendencies shaped by frequency, usage, and communicative function. Such investigations contribute to identifying both universal principles and language-specific variations in sentence construction.

The integration of computational methods and corpus-based analysis has also significantly advanced the study of the syntax–morphology interface. Large-scale annotated corpora enable researchers to examine authentic language use, providing empirical evidence of how morphological and syntactic features interact in real contexts. Resources like the Universal Dependencies framework facilitate standardized cross-linguistic comparison, supporting more robust and data-driven analyses. From a pedagogical standpoint, addressing morphosyntactic complexity requires targeted instructional strategies. Explicit teaching of the relationship between morphological forms and syntactic roles has been shown to improve learners' grammatical competence. As suggested by Adawiah et al. (2023), focused attention on morphosyntactic mappings can enhance learners' ability to produce structurally accurate and meaningful sentences. Taken together, these approaches illustrate the necessity of a multidimensional perspective in exploring the syntax–morphology interface. By integrating theoretical insights, empirical data, and practical applications, researchers can better account for the complexities involved in sentence construction processes. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate how morphological structures influence syntactic configurations, with particular emphasis on their role in shaping sentence construction. It seeks to analyze the mechanisms through which morphological elements such as affixation, inflection, and derivation interact with syntactic principles across diverse linguistic contexts.

Furthermore, this research evaluates the explanatory power of existing theoretical frameworks, including Distributed Morphology, by examining their applicability to both cross-linguistic data and empirical observations. In doing so, it aspires to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of grammar as an integrated system. Finally, this study also aims to identify key challenges encountered by learners and researchers in analyzing morphosyntactic structures and to propose effective pedagogical and computational strategies to address these issues. Through this exploration, the research is expected to provide meaningful contributions to both theoretical and applied linguistics, particularly in advancing

our understanding of how sentence construction processes are shaped by the intricate interplay between syntax and morphology.

## 2. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research design to explore the interface between syntax and morphology, with a particular emphasis on how internal word structures shape sentence construction processes. A qualitative approach is considered appropriate as it enables an in-depth and interpretative analysis of linguistic patterns, structural relationships, and functional interactions that are not readily quantifiable (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neuman, 2019; Tisdell et al., 2025). The primary focus of this investigation lies in examining how morphological components such as inflection, derivation, and compounding interact with syntactic mechanisms to influence the formation and organization of sentences.

The data for this study are drawn from both primary and secondary linguistic sources. Primary data consist of naturally occurring language samples obtained from cross-linguistic corpora representing typologically diverse languages. These include morphologically rich languages such as Turkish, Finnish, and Swahili, as well as morphologically less complex or analytic languages like English and Mandarin Chinese. To ensure analytical consistency and comparability, the study utilizes syntactically annotated corpora, particularly those developed within the Universal Dependencies framework, which provides standardized representations of morphosyntactic structures across languages (Nivre et al., 2020).

In addition to corpus-based data, this research incorporates a comprehensive review of relevant theoretical literature to support the analytical framework. Key perspectives include Distributed Morphology, which posits that morphological realization is derived from syntactic structures rather than pre-lexical processes (Wahid et al., 2020), the Lexicalist Hypothesis, which argues for the relative autonomy of morphological processes (Kartikasari et al., 2020), and usage-based approaches that emphasize the role of frequency and language use in shaping morphosyntactic patterns (Huang et al., 2024). These frameworks provide complementary lenses through which the interaction between morphology and syntax in sentence construction can be examined.

The data analysis is conducted through several systematic stages. First, morphological elements within lexical items such as roots, stems, and affixes are identified and classified based on their functional roles. Next, the syntactic environments in which these morphologically complex forms occur are analyzed, with particular attention to how morphological features influence grammatical relations, argument structure, agreement patterns, and word order. The analysis then proceeds by identifying recurring patterns as well as deviations, which are interpreted in relation to the selected theoretical models. This analytical procedure aligns with qualitative linguistic methodologies that emphasize pattern recognition and interpretative explanation (Miles & Huberman, 2019).

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study employs triangulation by integrating multiple data sources, cross-linguistic comparisons, and theoretical perspectives (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Comparative analysis is used to highlight similarities and differences in how morphological structures influence syntactic organization across languages. Where applicable, contrastive examples are provided to illustrate how variations in morphological marking correspond to differences in sentence construction processes.

Overall, this methodological framework is designed to provide a comprehensive, empirically grounded, and theoretically informed account of the syntax–morphology interface. By examining how morphological structures interact with syntactic processes, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of sentence construction mechanisms and to advance both theoretical and applied perspectives in linguistics.

### 3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that morphological structures play a pivotal role in shaping syntactic configurations, particularly in the encoding and interpretation of grammatical relations such as subject, object, tense, and aspect. Through a cross-linguistic analysis of typologically diverse languages, several systematic patterns emerge that highlight the centrality of the syntax–morphology interface in sentence construction processes. In morphologically rich languages, including Turkish, Finnish, and Swahili, grammatical relations are overtly encoded through inflectional morphology, such as case marking, agreement systems, and verbal conjugation. These morphological markers function as explicit indicators of syntactic roles, thereby reducing reliance on rigid word order. For instance, in Finnish, nominal case distinctions clearly differentiate syntactic functions, allowing constituents to be rearranged without compromising interpretability. This phenomenon reflects what Ananda et al. (2025) describes as the disambiguating function of case morphology, which enhances syntactic flexibility while maintaining structural clarity.

Similarly, in Turkish, the presence of accusative case marking enables variations in word order without altering propositional meaning. Sentences such as *Ali kitabı okudu* and *Kitabı Ali okudu* remain semantically equivalent due to the morphological marking of the object. This supports the typological observation that languages with extensive morphological marking tend to exhibit relatively free constituent order (Ananda et al., 2025).

In contrast, morphologically impoverished or analytic languages, such as English and Mandarin Chinese, rely predominantly on syntactic structure to encode grammatical relations. In these systems, word order assumes a central role in determining meaning, resulting in more rigid and hierarchical sentence structures. In English, the distinction between “The boy kicks the ball” and “The ball kicks the boy” is entirely dependent on the linear arrangement of constituents. This compensatory relationship between morphology and syntax has been widely discussed in typological studies, where reduced morphological marking corresponds to increased syntactic rigidity (Reuland, 2021).

Further evidence of this compensatory mechanism can be observed in the reliance on function words and auxiliary constructions in analytic languages. As noted by Bryk et al. (2012), such languages develop alternative grammatical strategies including the use of auxiliaries, prepositions, and fixed syntactic patterns to perform functions typically expressed through inflection in synthetic languages. Adawiah et al. (2023) further argues that function words in analytic systems carry substantial syntactic weight, effectively compensating for the absence of morphological encoding.

Another significant finding concerns the role of agreement systems in reinforcing syntactic cohesion. In languages such as Swahili, verbal morphology encodes both subject and object agreement, allowing grammatical relationships to be tracked across clauses, even in cases of displacement or ellipsis. Verbal prefixes function as markers that maintain syntactic coherence within complex constructions. This observation aligns with Chomsky (2014)

analysis of Bantu languages, where agreement morphology serves as a crucial mechanism linking morphology and syntax.

In addition to inflectional processes, derivational morphology also exerts a substantial influence on sentence construction by altering lexical categories and argument structures. Transformations such as *investigate* (verb) to *investigation* (noun) or *decide* to *decision* entail not only morphological modification but also changes in syntactic distribution and valency. As noted by Wahid et al. (2020), derivational morphology often reshapes the thematic structure of predicates, thereby constraining the syntactic environments in which derived forms can occur.

The findings further indicate that morphological marking contributes significantly to disambiguation and interpretive clarity in complex syntactic constructions. In languages with flexible word order, such as Latin, case marking ensures that grammatical roles remain identifiable even when constituents are rearranged or separated by intervening elements. This supports the view that morphology functions as a stabilizing mechanism in sentence processing, particularly in structures involving long-distance dependencies.

From a theoretical perspective, these empirical observations provide strong support for integrative models of grammar, particularly Distributed Morphology Wijewantha (2021). This framework posits that morphological realization is derived from syntactic structures and is sensitive to syntactic context, thereby accounting for the observed interdependence between word structure and sentence structure. As further elaborated by Embick and Noyer (2007), morphological operations are best understood as post-syntactic processes that interact dynamically with syntactic representations.

Moreover, the findings align with usage-based perspectives, which emphasize that morphosyntactic patterns emerge from language use and frequency (Evensen et al., 2018). This suggests that the interaction between morphology and syntax is not only structurally determined but also shaped by functional and cognitive factors.

From an applied standpoint, these results have important implications for language acquisition and processing. Learners of morphologically rich languages must acquire complex systems of inflection and agreement, whereas learners of analytic languages must develop sensitivity to syntactic ordering. As argued by Treesattayanmune and Baharudin (2024), language acquisition is guided by typological features that influence how grammatical relations are encoded, reinforcing the importance of the syntax–morphology interface in learning processes.

In summary, the findings of this study underscore that the relationship between morphology and syntax is fundamental to the architecture of grammar. Morphological features both inflectional and derivational serve as essential mediators in sentence construction, influencing syntactic organization, interpretability, and flexibility. These results reaffirm the necessity of analyzing syntax and morphology as interconnected components within an integrated grammatical system, particularly in cross-linguistic contexts characterized by typological diversity.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

This study has demonstrated that the interaction between morphology and syntax constitutes a fundamental component in shaping sentence construction processes across languages. The

findings reveal that morphological structures particularly inflectional and derivational mechanisms play a decisive role in encoding grammatical relations, influencing syntactic flexibility, and supporting interpretive clarity. In morphologically rich languages, grammatical roles are primarily signaled through overt morphological marking, allowing greater variation in word order without compromising meaning. Conversely, in analytic languages with limited morphological marking, syntactic structure becomes the primary mechanism for organizing sentence elements, resulting in more rigid and hierarchical constructions. These patterns confirm that morphology and syntax operate in a complementary and interdependent manner, forming an integrated grammatical system rather than separate modules. The study also reinforces theoretical models such as Distributed Morphology, which emphasize the inseparability of word structure and sentence structure in linguistic analysis.

The findings of this study carry significant implications for both theoretical and applied linguistics. From a theoretical perspective, the results contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of grammar as an interconnected system, supporting integrative frameworks that bridge morphology and syntax. This has important consequences for refining linguistic models that aim to account for cross-linguistic variation and universality. From an applied standpoint, the study offers valuable insights for language teaching and learning, particularly in highlighting the need for explicit instruction on the relationship between morphological forms and syntactic functions. For learners of morphologically complex languages, emphasis should be placed on mastering inflectional systems, while learners of analytic languages should focus on syntactic ordering and structural patterns. Additionally, the findings have implications for computational linguistics and natural language processing, where incorporating morphosyntactic interaction can enhance the accuracy of syntactic parsing and language modeling systems.

Despite the contributions of this study, several avenues remain open for future research. Further investigation is needed to explore the syntax–morphology interface in lesser-documented and underrepresented languages, particularly those with unique or highly complex morphological systems. Expanding the scope of research to include larger and more diverse corpora would allow for more robust empirical validation of the observed patterns. In addition, future studies could adopt mixed-method or quantitative approaches to complement qualitative findings and provide statistical generalization. Another promising direction involves examining the cognitive and psycholinguistic dimensions of morphosyntactic processing, especially in first and second language acquisition contexts. Finally, continued development of computational models that integrate morphological and syntactic features is essential for advancing language technologies, particularly in multilingual and low-resource settings. Through these efforts, future research can further deepen our understanding of how morphological and syntactic systems interact in shaping human language.

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