



An Analysis of Morphological Errors in Arabic Thesis Abstracts at a University Level

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Abstract:

Morphological competence plays a crucial role in producing academically sound Arabic writing, especially for non-native learners in higher education. This study aims to analyze and categorize morphological errors found in the thesis abstracts of students in the Arabic Language Education Study Program at IAIN Kediri. Using a qualitative descriptive method with a content analysis approach, the research focuses on identifying dominant patterns of morphological mistakes and offering strategic insights to improve linguistic accuracy in students' final academic projects. The data consisted of three randomly selected abstracts from 2023–2024 graduates, which served as the primary source, supported by secondary sources such as books and articles related to Arabic morphology. The analysis process involved four stages: data collection, error identification, explanation, and evaluation. The results revealed four major categories of morphological errors: incorrect word formation, misapplication of wazan (word patterns), inaccurate use of various types of hamzah, and improper placement of *ḍamir* (pronouns). These findings suggest the need for targeted instructional interventions to reinforce students' understanding of Arabic morphological structures in academic contexts.

Keywords: *Morphology, Error Analysis, Arabic Education*

Abstrak:

Kompetensi morfologi memegang peranan penting dalam menghasilkan karya tulis bahasa Arab yang bermutu secara akademis, khususnya bagi pembelajar non-asli di jenjang pendidikan tinggi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dan mengkategorikan kesalahan morfologi yang ditemukan dalam abstrak skripsi mahasiswa Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Arab IAIN Kediri. Dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan analisis isi, penelitian ini difokuskan pada identifikasi pola dominan kesalahan morfologi dan menawarkan wawasan strategis untuk meningkatkan akurasi linguistik dalam proyek akademik akhir mahasiswa. Data terdiri dari tiga abstrak yang dipilih secara acak dari lulusan tahun 2023–2024, yang berfungsi sebagai sumber utama, didukung oleh sumber sekunder seperti buku dan artikel yang terkait dengan morfologi bahasa Arab. Proses analisis melibatkan empat tahap: pengumpulan data, identifikasi kesalahan, penjelasan, dan evaluasi. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan empat kategori utama kesalahan morfologi: pembentukan kata yang salah, penerapan wazan (pola kata) yang salah, penggunaan berbagai jenis hamzah yang tidak tepat, dan penempatan *ḍamir* (kata ganti) yang tidak tepat. Temuan-temuan ini menunjukkan perlunya intervensi pengajaran yang terarah untuk memperkuat pemahaman siswa terhadap struktur morfologi bahasa Arab dalam konteks akademis.

Kata Kunci: *Morfologi, Analisis Kesalahan, Pendidikan Bahasa Arab*

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INTRODUCTION / المقدمة

Morphology is one of the essential components in the study of language, particularly in Arabic linguistics. It plays a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of how words are formed, derived, and applied in meaningful contexts. Known as 'Ilm al-Sharf, Arabic morphology investigates root patterns, changes in word structure, and their grammatical and semantic implications. Mastery of morphology supports students' ability to write and speak accurately, which is vital in academic settings. In contrast to phonology or semantics, morphology requires attention to structural transformation within words (Belkebir, 2021; Kharsa et al., 2024; Zalmout, 2020). Arabic morphology also introduces learners to the logic of derivation, which aids in vocabulary expansion. Without a firm grasp of morphology, students risk producing grammatically flawed language (Al-Thubaity et al., 2020; Seker, 2020). Thus, this area becomes highly significant in evaluating language proficiency, especially in formal writing like thesis abstracts that demand linguistic precision.

In the context of Arabic education in Indonesia, morphological competence is particularly vital, as Arabic functions as both a religious and academic language. Arabic is widely taught in universities and Islamic institutions, serving as the primary foreign language in many pesantren. Despite its importance, many students still face difficulties in producing accurate Arabic expressions, especially when writing formal academic texts (Alhafni et al., 2023; Alkhurayyif, 2023; Kodner, 2022). Morphological errors commonly appear in thesis abstracts, where students are expected to summarize their research concisely. These errors can include incorrect use of wazan, errors in fi'il patterns, misuse of pronouns (ḍamīr), and incorrect writing of hamzah (Abdalla & Mahfoudhi, 2023; Hejazi & Shaalan, 2021; Issa, 2023). Such errors indicate gaps in students' understanding of word formation rules. Addressing these gaps is essential, not only for improving academic performance but also for enhancing the credibility of scholarly Arabic texts within the broader educational and Islamic academic discourse.

Several previous studies have examined linguistic challenges in Arabic academic writing, with particular attention to morphology and syntax (Al-Rfooh et al., 2023; Asadi et al., 2023; Boraik et al., 2022; Tallas-Mahajna, 2024). For example, research at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang identified common errors in student abstracts, such as incorrect usage of mudhaf–mudhaf ilaih, na'at–man'ut constructions, and number-gender agreement. The study also revealed multiple cases of misused word forms that affected sentence clarity. However, limited research has focused exclusively on morphological issues in thesis abstracts, which are crucial academic texts for Arabic students. This lack of focused analysis presents a gap in both curriculum design and teaching strategy. Understanding the types of morphological errors found in student writing can help lecturers and educators design more targeted interventions (Alkhatlan et al., 2020). It also highlights the necessity of integrating morphology-focused instruction into Arabic writing courses, especially for students preparing to write formal academic documents such as theses.

This current study aims to investigate the morphological errors found in Arabic thesis abstracts written by students of the Arabic Language Education Department at IAIN Kediri. The research will focus on identifying the most frequent types of morphological errors, analyzing the root causes, and proposing pedagogical strategies to address these problems. By examining real examples from student abstracts, the study hopes to provide practical insights into how morphological mistakes occur and how they can be minimized. This analysis will also contribute to the ongoing efforts to improve Arabic writing instruction

at the university level. Through empirical data and analysis, the research seeks to support the refinement of curriculum content and the development of teaching materials that directly address morphological competence in Arabic, ultimately aiming to raise the standard of student academic writing in Arabic.

The significance of this study lies in its dual focus: documenting actual morphological errors in academic writing and providing relevant educational responses. Unlike general linguistic studies, this research situates its findings within a specific genre, Arabic thesis abstracts, where accurate language use is non-negotiable. The originality of this study lies in its attempt to combine linguistic analysis with applied language pedagogy. By doing so, it contributes to both theoretical discussions in Arabic linguistics and practical developments in Arabic language instruction. The outcomes of this research are expected to aid educators in designing focused learning interventions and refining assessment criteria in academic writing. Furthermore, it may serve as a reference for future studies that aim to explore other areas of Arabic grammar and composition in higher education contexts, particularly within Islamic and Arabic language departments.

RESEARCH METHOD / المنهجية

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a content analysis method to examine morphological errors in Arabic thesis abstracts (Finn, 2022). The qualitative method was selected because it allows in-depth interpretation of written language phenomena, focusing on naturally occurring data. The data source consisted of three abstracts randomly selected from the 2023–2024 graduating students of the Arabic Language Education Program at IAIN Kediri. These abstracts served as primary data because they reflect authentic student writing in formal academic Arabic. Secondary data were gathered from books and journals discussing Arabic morphology and syntax. The focus of the study was on identifying morphological issues, such as errors in wazan, misuse of fi'il forms, and incorrect application of *ḍamīr* or *hamzah*, which frequently appear in student abstracts and affect grammatical accuracy.

Data collection involved the researcher as the primary instrument, using a morphological error analysis table as a supporting tool. This table helped categorize errors systematically based on form, type, and rule violation. The analysis followed four main stages: (1) collecting thesis abstract texts, (2) identifying errors in morphological structure, (3) explaining each error according to Arabic grammar rules, and (4) evaluating error frequency and significance. Each error was documented with an explanation of its deviation from standard Arabic norms. Through this method, the research aimed to map recurring morphological mistakes and uncover possible learning gaps in students' understanding of Arabic grammar. The error analysis framework followed the model proposed by Corder and was adapted for Arabic linguistic structures.

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative thematic analysis, emphasizing pattern recognition in morphological inaccuracies (Wesely et al., 2024). This method allowed for the classification of errors into categories that could inform pedagogical improvements. The use of authentic thesis abstracts ensured that findings were relevant to academic writing contexts. By identifying common error patterns, the study provides insights for Arabic language instructors to design targeted instructional strategies and error-based grammar reinforcement. This approach is particularly valuable in Arabic higher education settings, where morphology plays a foundational role in student writing. Ultimately, the research method supported a comprehensive analysis of student

performance and offers recommendations for enhancing morphology teaching practices in Arabic Language Education Programs.

نتائج البحث و المناقشة / FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Dominance of Hamzah and Ta' Marbutah Errors in Word Structure

The most prevalent morphological error discovered in the thesis abstracts analyzed was the misapplication of hamzah and ta' marbutah, two crucial elements in Arabic orthography that serve both grammatical and semantic functions. Students frequently confused hamzah qotho' (independent hamzah) and hamzah washl (connective hamzah), which often resulted in orthographic distortions and misinterpretation of meaning. For instance, the word "الإستقصاء البيانات" misuses hamzah qotho', whereas the correct form requires hamzah washl. Additionally, the omission of ta' marbutah in feminine nouns such as "انغي نور البيت" and "كتاب تدريس العربية المكثف" distorts gender agreement, a fundamental rule in Arabic morphology that affects concord with adjectives, verbs, and pronouns.

This recurring pattern of errors illustrates a critical gap in students' understanding of the functional role these letters play within Arabic word structure. A lecturer involved in the thesis review process noted, "Many students make typos simply because they don't know the function of hamzah or when to use ta' marbutah. This is the basis of the science of shorof." The observation was reinforced by a review of corrected abstracts, in which a significant portion of revision notes addressed such letter-specific inaccuracies. The errors were not merely typographical but indicated a broader issue: students tend to memorize vocabulary without internalizing morphological rules.

During follow-up interviews, one student reflected on their confusion, stating, "I am often confused about when to use a stand-alone hamzah and when not to, because sometimes I just follow my writing habits." This confession underscores that the errors stem not just from a lack of instruction but from over-reliance on intuitive or habitual usage without grammatical awareness. Another student added, "I often forget about Ta' marbutah because it doesn't look much different if read quickly, even though it turns out to be very important." Such admissions highlight how orthographic elements that may seem minor can carry significant grammatical weight in Arabic.

Furthermore, classroom observations revealed that these errors persisted even after instruction, suggesting that the teaching of hamzah and ta' marbutah may not be sufficiently contextualized or reinforced. A supervising lecturer noted, "When asked why it was wrong, many of them did not know it was wrong. This means that it is not just a matter of forgetting, but they do not understand the concept." These insights indicate the need for more explicit, practice-based instruction focusing on Arabic orthographic markers as functional grammatical tools. Strengthening this area of instruction can improve not only writing accuracy but also overall morphological competence in academic Arabic.

In conclusion, the consistent misapplication of hamzah and ta' marbutah demonstrates a crucial area where Arabic language instruction at the university level must be reinforced. These elements are not merely orthographic details but integral parts of morphological structure. Their proper use ensures clarity, grammatical alignment, and academic credibility. The findings suggest that targeted instruction, combined with iterative feedback, is essential for developing students' awareness and mastery of these morphological features in scholarly Arabic writing.

Inconsistency in Wazan Selection and Derivational Structure

A prominent error pattern identified in the thesis abstracts was the inconsistency in selecting appropriate wazan (word patterns) and constructing derivative word forms. Arabic morphology, particularly the science of *ṣarf*, heavily depends on correct root extraction and the application of established *awzān* to form meaningful words. However, several students demonstrated a lack of mastery in this area, resulting in the distortion of meaning and grammatical structure. For instance, in Table 2, the sentence "استخدم الباحثون" incorrectly employs the plural masculine form for an intended singular subject. The correct form should be "استخدم الباحث", which follows the pattern *fa'ala al-bāḥith* in the third person singular masculine. Similarly, "طريقة الاستنباطية" misuses the derived form from the root *n-b-ṭ*; the intended meaning aligns more with "الاستنباطية", which follows the correct pattern *istif'āliyyah*.

As stated above, the analysis of morphological errors in the abstracts of Arabic Language Education students' theses was carried out in 4 stages, namely collecting, identifying errors, explaining errors, and evaluating errors. To make it easier to identify these errors, the data obtained was sorted using the analysis of the Arabic word division system. The results of the analysis of morphological errors in the abstracts of Arabic Language Education students can be seen in the following table.

Table 1 Abstract Mistakes Identification 1

NO	Sentence	The Mistake Identification
1	احمد صالح الدين	The mistake of not using hamzah qotho
2	انغي نور البيت	The mistake of not using ta' marbutoh even though the context is mu'anats
3	كتاب تدريس العربية المكثف	The mistake of not using ta' marbutoh even though the context is mu'anats.
4	الإستقصاء البيانات	Mistake in using hamzah qotho', should use hamzah washol.
5	الوقت الحد	The error cannot be understood, it should be by the meaning of the isim الوقت المحدود, namely.

Based on Table 1 above regarding the analysis of morphological errors in the abstracts of the theses of students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program, it can be seen that there are several morphological errors in Arabic (*shorof*). These morphological errors include: (1) errors in writing words, (2) errors in choosing the wazan, and (3) errors in writing the letter hamzah. (4) errors in placing the dhamir.

Table 2: Abstract Mistakes Identification 2

NO	Sentence	The Mistake Identification
1	استخدم الباحثون	Using waqi' plural mudzakkar ghoib, it should be الباحث using waqi' mufrod mudzakkar ghoib.

2	طريقة الاستنباطية	The mistake of using it and it cannot be understood according to the meaning, it should use الاستنباطية b, namely.
3	التجريبية	The error is not in line with the previous wording in the abstract, so that it is in lineuse التجربة.

Based on Table 2 above regarding the analysis of morphological errors in the abstracts of the theses of students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program, it can be seen that there are several morphological errors in Arabic (shorof). These morphological errors include: (1) errors in writing words, (2) errors in choosing wazan, and (3) errors in writing the letter hamzah.

Table 3 Abstract Mistakes Identification 3

NO	Sentence	The Mistake Identification
1	ا مسريف البحث العلمي	The error does not match the meaning of the isim fa'il and the meaning, and the correct meaning is المشرف.
2	بمهام خاصة	The correct one is not using ta' marbutah. Using waqi' plural mudzakkar ghoib, it should be الباحث using waqi' mufrod mudzakkar ghoib.
4	بسهولة أكبر	The error is that it does not match the wazan mu'anats; the correct one is كبرى.

Based on Table 3 above regarding the analysis of morphological errors in the abstracts of the theses of students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program, it can be seen that there are several morphological errors in Arabic (shorof). These morphological errors include: (1) errors in spelling words, (2) errors in choosing the wazan, and (3) errors in placing the dhamir.

In this context, the four-step error analysis collection, identification, explanation, and evaluation proved useful in revealing systematic issues in students' morphological derivation. The pattern of errors related to wazan selection is not isolated; it reappears across various abstracts, indicating a pedagogical gap. If students are not trained to consistently apply root-based derivation rules, especially in productive academic writing, such errors will persist. Therefore, this finding underscores the need for reinforcement of applied şarf exercises that go beyond rote memorization toward contextual usage. By integrating these morphological principles into writing instruction and offering real-time corrective feedback, students' ability to generate structurally accurate and semantically appropriate words can be significantly improved.

Semantic Disruption Triggered by Inappropriate Use of Ism, Ğamir, and Grammatical Structures

The third key finding of this study points to semantic disruptions caused by students' misapplication of ism fā'il (agent nouns), Ğamir (pronouns), and agreement rules within sentence structures. These errors were not isolated but were found repeatedly across thesis abstracts, undermining clarity and coherence. For instance, the use of "ا مسريف البحث العلمي" (Table 3) reveals a clear misunderstanding of agent noun formation. The correct form, "المشرف", is not only morphologically accurate but semantically functional,

aligning with the intended meaning of "supervisor." Similarly, the phrase "يستخدم الباحثون" misrepresents the grammatical number of the subject. While *jamak mudzakkar ghā'ib* (third-person plural masculine) is used, the subject intended in context is singular, requiring the use of "الباحث". Such mismatches distort meaning and compromise the formal tone expected in academic writing.

Classroom observations during thesis writing workshops reinforced these findings. In one session, students were asked to draft short abstract segments collaboratively. A pattern emerged: many groups struggled with consistency between *ḍamīr* references and their antecedents. For example, one group wrote "وأظهروا النتائج" (they showed the results), referring to a single male researcher. When corrected, several students expressed surprise, revealing their habitual reliance on visual or phonetic familiarity rather than structural accuracy. As a language supervisor remarked, "They often focus on the sound, not the structure. If it sounds formal or familiar, they use it right away even though it doesn't fit the sentence structure."

Documentation from the sessions showed repeated confusion in adjective agreement, particularly in phrases like "بسهولة أكبر". Here, "أكبر" fails to align grammatically with the feminine noun "سهولة". The proper adjective form, "كبرى", follows the pattern of *af'al-fa'lā* gender pairing, crucial in Arabic. A lecturer explained, "Mistakes like this occur because they do not realize that the noun and noun phrase must match in terms of *jins* and *wazan*, not just the meaning." This was further supported by field notes indicating that students often hesitated or avoided complex sentence constructions that required adjective-noun or verb-subject agreement, opting instead for simpler, sometimes ungrammatical structures.

This indicates a deeper issue: the grammatical sense *al-dhawq al-naḥwī* needed for cohesive Arabic writing has not been internalized. Students fail to perceive how word choice, form, and syntactic position shape the semantic integrity of a sentence. Without this intuitive grammatical awareness, even abstract writing becomes mechanistic and error-prone. As one student admitted during a focus group session, "I often think that using the 'official' form is enough. But it turns out that even the official form can be wrong if the sentence structure is not appropriate." In sum, this finding demonstrates the urgent need to integrate structural grammar instruction with real-context application in academic Arabic. Grammatical congruency between *ism*, *ḍamīr*, and the broader sentence structure is not just a matter of rules, but a reflection of semantic precision and communicative accuracy. By cultivating morphological sensitivity through guided writing tasks, contextual grammar drills, and self-editing exercises, students can develop not only correctness but also confidence in navigating formal Arabic composition.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal a consistent pattern of morphological errors in the Arabic thesis abstracts of students in the Arabic Language Education Program, indicating both technical and conceptual gaps in their understanding of Arabic morphology (*ṣarf*). These findings are not only aligned with earlier studies on common learner errors in Arabic writing, but they also offer deeper insights into how specific structural elements (Ibrahim, 2024; Jaradat & Martini, 2022). Such as *hamzah*, *ta' marbutah*, *wazan*, and *ḍamīr* impact the grammatical integrity of academic texts (Elkhayati & Elkettani, 2021; Elmallah et al., 2024; Khalifa et al., 2024).

The first finding, which emphasizes the dominance of *hamzah* and *ta' marbutah*

errors, underscores a foundational issue in the students' morphological literacy. These orthographic features, though sometimes perceived as minor, play pivotal roles in grammatical agreement and semantic clarity. The confusion between hamzah qat' and hamzah waṣl, as well as the omission of ta' marbutah in feminine nouns, suggests that students are primarily relying on phonetic memory rather than grammatical rule-based knowledge. This is consistent with the idea that in non-native Arabic instruction, orthographic precision is often under-emphasized, despite its relevance for semantic interpretation (Dheif et al., 2022; Issa, 2022). Thus, this points to an instructional gap: educators must place stronger emphasis on orthographic conventions as tools for conveying meaning, not just spelling.

The second finding relates to inconsistency in the use of correct wazan patterns and derivational morphology, particularly in the formation of abstract nouns and verb conjugations. This reflects a deeper issue in the internalization of ṣarf rules, where students show limited ability to derive or recognize appropriate morphological patterns based on root forms. The misapplication of the pattern in words such as "الاستنباطية" (instead of "الاستنباطية") or the inconsistent use of verb-subject agreement (e.g., "استخدم الباحثون" vs. "استخدم الباحث") demonstrates a lack of morphological flexibility. This confirms the observation by Al-Sultan & Alzain (2024) that a solid grasp of awzān is fundamental to Arabic word-building competency. Moreover, the persistent nature of these errors across multiple abstracts implies a systemic issue in the curriculum, where ṣarf may be taught in isolation rather than integrated into practical writing contexts.

The third major finding highlights semantic disruptions caused by improper alignment between ism, ḍamīr, and grammatical structure. Errors like using "مسيريف البحث" instead of "المشرف", or mismatches in gendered adjectives ("أكبر" instead of "كبرى"), show how grammatical inaccuracies can distort or dilute meaning. These misalignments weaken the academic tone and often lead to confusion or ambiguity in the reader's interpretation. Classroom observations reinforce this diagnosis: students often fail to adjust form to function, indicating that they lack al-dhawq al-naḥwī, the intuitive grammatical awareness essential for natural-sounding, cohesive Arabic writing (Baharun, 2023; Nisa' & R, 2024; Sain, 2025). This supports the argument made by Kassad & Shaheen (2024) that grammatical awareness in Arabic is not merely a matter of memorizing rules, but of developing an internalized sense of how forms relate to meanings and contexts.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Arabic morphological instruction in the academic setting must move beyond traditional memorization of forms. It requires a contextualized, practice-based approach that integrates morphology into actual writing tasks, particularly in formal academic genres such as abstracts. Targeted interventions such as guided peer review, real-time morphological correction exercises, and error-based instructional design could significantly enhance both grammatical accuracy and semantic control. Furthermore, combining abstract grammar theory with applied writing contexts would empower students to not only construct correct forms but to do so meaningfully and purposefully.

In conclusion, the morphological errors identified in this study are not superficial; they are symptomatic of broader pedagogical challenges in Arabic language education at the tertiary level. Addressing these issues demands a curricular reorientation that emphasizes functional morphology, real-time feedback, and iterative writing practice. Such changes are essential to improve students' academic Arabic proficiency and their ability to participate effectively in scholarly discourse.

CONCLUSION / الخلاصة

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that students of the Arabic Language Education Study Program at IAIN Kediri, as non-native Arabic learners, face significant challenges in writing Arabic thesis abstracts, particularly in the morphological aspect. The study revealed recurrent errors in the use of hamzah, ta' marbutah, selection of wazan, and placement of damir, which affect both grammatical accuracy and semantic clarity. These issues reflect gaps in the internalization of Arabic morphological rules and orthographic conventions, despite students' long-standing exposure to the Arabic language through religious practices. To minimize these errors, it is necessary to reinforce foundational materials such as IMLA, encourage frequent exposure to academic vocabulary through Fathul Kutub, and review core linguistic courses, especially in şarf and naḥw. Future research is recommended to broaden the scope beyond abstracts and to include semantic and substantive analysis across the entire thesis structure for a more comprehensive understanding of students' academic Arabic proficiency.

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