



DERIVATIONAL SUFFIXES ON *ULANGEN* IN THE KARO LANGUAGE BIBLE

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis sufiks derivatif yang terdapat dalam *Ulangen* pada Alkitab Bahasa Karo. Fokus penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi jenis, fungsi, dan makna sufiks derivatif yang digunakan dalam teks tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif. Data diambil dari ayat-ayat dalam *Ulangen* Alkitab Bahasa Karo yang mengandung sufiks derivatif dan dikumpulkan melalui teknik dokumentasi. Data yang telah dikumpulkan dianalisis berdasarkan teori derivasi yang dikemukakan oleh Yule. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat tiga jenis sufiks derivatif yang ditemukan dalam *Ulangen*, yaitu sufiks *-ken*, sufiks *-i*, dan sufiks *-en*. Di antara ketiga sufiks tersebut, sufiks *-ken* merupakan sufiks derivatif yang paling dominan dan produktif, yang terutama berfungsi untuk membentuk verba bermakna kausatif. Sufiks *-i* berfungsi untuk membentuk verba yang menyatakan tindakan, proses, atau makna lokatif, sedangkan sufiks *-en* berfungsi sebagai penominal yang membentuk nomina yang menyatakan hasil, objek, atau konsep abstrak. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa sufiks derivatif dalam bahasa Karo berfungsi untuk membentuk leksem baru dengan mengubah makna dan, dalam beberapa kasus, kategori leksikal kata dasar. Temuan ini mendukung teori Yule yang menyatakan bahwa morfologi derivatif memiliki peran penting dalam pembentukan kata. Selain itu, penggunaan sufiks derivatif yang konsisten dalam Alkitab Bahasa Karo menunjukkan bahwa teks keagamaan dapat menjadi sumber data yang andal untuk analisis morfologis serta berkontribusi pada pendokumentasian bahasa daerah dan bahasa minoritas.

Kata Kunci: *Morfologi, Sufiks Derivatif, Bahasa Karo, Ulangen*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze derivational suffixes found in *Ulangen* of the Karo Language Bible. The focus of the study is to identify the types, functions, and meanings of derivational suffixes used in the text. This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The data were taken from verses in *Ulangen* of the Karo Language Bible containing derivational suffixes and were collected through documentation techniques. The collected data were analyzed based on Yule's theory of derivation. The findings show that there are three types of derivational suffixes found in *Ulangen*, namely suffix *-ken*, suffix *-i*, and suffix *-en*. Among these suffixes, suffix *-ken* is the most dominant and productive derivational suffix, primarily functioning to derive verbs with causative meanings. Suffix *-i* functions to derive verbs expressing actions, processes, or locative meanings, while suffix *-en* functions as a nominalizer forming nouns that express results, objects, or abstract concepts. The study concludes that derivational suffixes in the Karo language function to form new lexemes by changing meanings and, in some cases, lexical categories of base words. These findings support Yule's theory that derivational morphology plays a crucial role in word formation. Furthermore, the consistent use of derivational suffixes



in the Karo Language Bible indicates that religious texts provide reliable data for morphological analysis and contribute to the documentation of regional and minority languages.

Keywords: *Morphology, Derivational Suffixes, Karo Language, Ulangen*

INTRODUCTION

Language is a complex system of human communication used to express thoughts, emotions, and information. It is governed by internal structures and rules that enable speakers to produce and interpret meaningful expressions. One important area that examines these internal rules is morphology, a core branch of linguistics concerned with the internal structure of words and word-formation processes. Morphological studies focus on how morphemes combine to form words and how these processes contribute to meaning construction and vocabulary expansion. One of the central processes in morphology is derivation, which involves the addition of affixes to a base or root to create new lexemes. Derivational processes often result in changes in meaning and, in many cases, changes in word class. Recent studies emphasize that derivational morphology plays a crucial role in lexical development and semantic expansion across languages (Aronoff, 2016; Booij, 2017). In this regard, derivation is considered a productive mechanism that systematically links form and meaning in word formation.

Among derivational processes, suffixation plays a particularly significant role in word formation. Derivational suffixes are bound morphemes attached to the end of a base word and function to modify meaning and lexical category. Plag (2018) demonstrates that derivational suffixation is a key indicator of morphological productivity, as it systematically generates new lexemes while maintaining predictable formal and semantic patterns. Similarly, Lieber and Štekauer (2018) emphasize that suffixation reflects underlying grammatical and semantic regularities, showing how word formation processes are constrained by both structural and cognitive principles within a language.

Previous studies have demonstrated that derivational morphology is highly productive in Batak languages. Research on Karo, Toba Batak, and other Batak languages indicates that derivational affixes play an important role in lexical formation and semantic expansion (Ginting & Tarigan, 2018; Sihombing, 2017; Simanjuntak, 2019). Studies on Toba Batak further reveal similar derivational patterns, including excessive adjective formation through multiple affixations (Ambarita et al., 2020; Ambarita et al., 2021). Adjectival affixation processes (Ambarita, 2019) and adverbial derivation (Ambarita, 2017) are also documented. These findings support the view that derivational morphology is a shared and productive feature across Batak languages, including Karo. More recent research also confirms that suffixation remains a highly productive derivational process in Batak languages, particularly in deriving verbs and nouns (Nababan, 2023).

Beyond studies on Batak languages, research on derivational morphology across languages and text types indicates that affixation is a productive and systematic process contributing to lexical expansion and meaning formation. Aronoff (2016) and Booij (2017) argue that derivational morphology is governed by rule-based and constructional mechanisms that shape how new lexical items are generated and how form and meaning are integrated within a language. Plag (2018) further demonstrates that affixation is a major indicator of morphological productivity, reflecting recurring semantic and grammatical regularities across different text types. In addition, studies on Austronesian and regional languages emphasize that morphological analysis based on textual data plays a crucial role in language documentation



and descriptive linguistics, as demonstrated in the literature on corpus creation and archiving (Austin, 2022), Arka (2017), and Musgrave and Thieberger (2017).

In addition to spoken and narrative texts, religious texts—especially Bible translations—provide valuable data for linguistic analysis because they preserve consistent grammatical and morphological patterns. Recent studies argue that textual data from translated religious texts can serve as reliable corpora for examining linguistic structures, including morphological processes and word-formation patterns (Purba, 2020). Most existing research concentrates on general texts or spoken discourse, leaving derivational suffixes in biblical texts relatively underexplored. Furthermore, previous studies tend to discuss derivational processes in Batak languages in a broad or comparative manner, without providing a detailed, text-based analysis of suffixal derivation within a specific religious corpus.

Despite the growing body of research on derivational morphology in regional languages, studies focusing specifically on derivational suffixes in Ulangen of the Karo Language Bible remain limited. As a result, there is still limited understanding of how derivational suffixes function semantically and categorically in Ulangen as a formal and standardized variety of the Karo language used in biblical translation. Therefore, this study aims to address this research gap by analyzing the types, functions, and meanings of derivational suffixes found in Ulangen of the Karo Language Bible. The novelty of this study lies in its focused examination of derivational suffixation within a biblical text, offering new empirical evidence on morphological patterns in Ulangen and contributing to both Batak linguistics and text-based morphological studies in Austronesian languages.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method to analyze derivational suffixes found in *Ulangen* of the Karo Language Bible. The qualitative approach is suitable for describing linguistic forms and explaining how derivational suffixes function within the text. The data source is the Karo Language Bible, chosen because of its standardized and carefully translated lexical choices, which provide clear and consistent morphological patterns. The data were collected through documentation techniques, in which verses containing derivational suffixes were identified, extracted, and classified. The collected data were then analyzed based on Yule's (2020) theory of derivation through several steps, namely identifying the base forms, determining the attached suffixes, classifying the types of derivational suffixes, and interpreting their functions and meanings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the results and discussions of derivational suffixes found in *Ulangen* of the Karo Language Bible. The discussion focuses on the types of derivational suffixes and their morphological functions based on Yule's (2020) theory. Based on the analysis, the study found three types of derivational suffixes, namely suffix *-ken*, suffix *-i*, and suffix *-en*. These suffixes are used to form new words by changing meanings and, in some cases, the lexical categories of the base words.

Derivational suffixes are bound morphemes attached to the end of a base word to form new lexemes. According to Yule (2020), derivational suffixes function to change the meaning of the root and may also change its grammatical category. In the Karo language, derivational suffixes play an important role in expanding vocabulary, particularly in verbal and nominal



formations. The findings show that derivational suffixes in *Ulangen* are dominantly realized through the suffixes *-ken*, *-i*, and *-en*.

Derivational Suffix - *ken*

Suffix *-ken* is the most productive derivational suffix found in *Ulangen* of the Karo Language Bible. This suffix is generally attached to verbs and adjectives to form new verbs. The primary function of the suffix *-ken* is to express causative meaning, indicating that an action causes a state or condition to occur. The addition of suffix *-ken* may or may not change the lexical category of the base word. However, it always results in a new lexical meaning.

For example, when the suffix *-ken* is attached to the base word *pulah* (verb), it forms the derived word *pulahken*, which means “to cause someone to be freed.” Similarly, the base word *terang* (adjective) becomes *nerangken* after the addition of the suffix *-ken*, changing its lexical category from adjective to verb and meaning “to explain” or “to make clear.” These examples indicate that suffix *-ken* functions as a causative derivational suffix in the Karo language. Further evidence of the causative function and lexical category shift associated with the suffix *-ken* is presented in Table 1 (Derivational Suffix *-ken*).

Table 1. Derivational Suffix *-ken*

Base Word	Lexical Category	Suffix	Derived Word	Lexical Category
pulah	Verb	-ken	pulahken	Verb
tading	Verb	-ken	nadingken	Verb
turi	Verb	-ken	turinken	Verb
terang	Adjective	-ken	nerangken	Verb
mere	Verb	-ken	mereken	Verb
ngendes	Verb	-ken	endesken	Verb
tuduh	Verb	-ken	nuduhken	Verb
taluk	Verb	-ken	nalukken	Verb
mulih	Verb	-ken	mulihken	Verb
rikut	Verb	-ken	rikutken	Verb
dahi	Verb	-ken	dahiken	Verb
cidah	Verb	-ken	cidahken	Verb
penggel	Verb	-ken	penggelken	Verb
kernepe	Verb	-ken	kernepeken	Verb
sontar	Verb	-ken	sontarken	Verb
bulak	Verb	-ken	bulakken	Verb
buni	Verb	-ken	buniken	Verb
pajek	Verb	-ken	pajekken	Verb
lit	Adjective	-ken	litken	Verb
deher	Verb	-ken	deherken	Verb
ampar	Verb	-ken	amparken	Verb
oge	Verb	-ken	ogeken	Verb
turi	Verb	-ken	nuriken	Verb

Table 1 shows that the suffix *-ken* is overwhelmingly attached to verbal bases, with adjectival bases occurring less frequently. Across the data, the derivation consistently results in



verb formation, indicating a strong tendency toward causative verb derivation in Ulangen. The distribution of base categories suggests that the suffix *-ken* is primarily used to extend verbal meanings rather than to introduce new lexical classes. This pattern further confirms the high productivity of the suffix *-ken* in the Karo Language Bible.

Derivational Suffix *-i*

Suffix *-i* is another derivational suffix found in *Ulangen*. This suffix is commonly attached to nouns and verbs to form new verbs. The function of suffix *-i* is to express actions, processes, or locative meanings, showing that an action is directed toward an object, place, or person. According to Yule (2020), derivational suffixes may derive new verbs without drastically changing the base form.

For instance, the base word *ingan* (noun), meaning “place” or “residence,” becomes *ingani* after the addition of suffix *-i*, meaning “to occupy” or “to live in.” Another example is *hamati*, derived from the adjective *hamat* (respect), which becomes a verb meaning “to honor.” These examples demonstrate that suffix *-i* changes both the meaning and, in many cases, the lexical category of the base word. Additional patterns of semantic shift and lexical category change associated with the suffix *-i* are presented in Table 2 (Derivational Suffix *-i*).

Table 2. Derivational Suffix *-i*

Base Word	Lexical Category	Suffix	Derived Word	Lexical Category
tangtang	Verb	-i	tangtangi	Verb
ingan	Noun	-i	ingani	Verb
nggelar	Verb	-i	nggelari	Verb
ngepar	Verb	-i	ngepari	Verb
munuh	Verb	-i	munuhi	Verb
deher	Verb	-i	deheri	Verb
sampat	Verb	-i	sampati	Verb
ngingan	Noun	-i	ngingani	Verb
hamat	Adjective	-i	hamati	Verb
mengket	Verb	-i	mengketi	Verb
rubat	Verb	-i	rubati	Verb
kawal	Verb	-i	kawali	Verb

Table 2 illustrates that the suffix *-i* predominantly derives verbs across different base categories, indicating a strong tendency toward verbalization in Ulangen. The data suggest that this suffix functions to highlight the direction or target of an action rather than to introduce entirely new lexical classes. The consistent verb outcomes reflect the role of *-i* in structuring action oriented meanings within the morphological system of the Karo language. This pattern further supports the productivity of the suffix *-i* in the derivational morphology of the Karo Language Bible.

Derivational Suffix *-en*

Suffix *-en* is less frequently used compared to suffix *-ken* and *-i*, but it still functions as a derivational suffix in the Karo language. This suffix is generally attached to verbs or adjectives to form nouns that express results, objects, or abstract concepts. The addition of suffix *-en* often results in a change of lexical category from verb or adjective to noun.



For example, the base word *ukum* (verb), meaning “to punish,” becomes *ukumen* after the addition of suffix *-en*, which refers to “punishment.” Similarly, the word *inem* (noun) becomes *inemen*, meaning “drink” or “beverage.” These forms indicate that suffix *-en* contributes to nominal derivation in the Karo language. Further evidence of nominal formation through the suffix *-en* is presented in Table 3 (Derivational Suffix *-en*).

Table 3. Derivational Suffix *-en*

Base Form	Lexical Category	Suffix	Derived Word	Lexical Category
inem	Noun	-en	inemen	Noun
ukum	Verb	-en	ukumen	Noun
pantang	Adjective	-en	pantangen	Noun

Table 3 shows that the suffix *-en* consistently yields nominal forms, regardless of the lexical category of the base word. The data indicate that this suffix plays a role in reifying actions or qualities into entities or conceptual results. Compared to other derivational suffixes, the distribution of *-en* suggests a more restricted but functionally specific use within the morphological system of Ulangen. This pattern confirms that, although less productive, the suffix *-en* contributes systematically to nominal derivation in the Karo Language Bible.

Discussion

The detailed presentation of derivational suffixes in the tables shows that derivational morphology is highly productive in Ulangen of the Karo Language Bible. Among the three derivational suffixes found, suffix *-ken* appears as the most dominant and productive suffix. This dominance indicates that the Karo language frequently employs causative and applicative derivation to form new verbal lexemes. The high frequency of this suffix also reflects a systematic pattern of verb formation within the morphological structure of Ulangen (Körtvélyessy, 2025; Gayan & Nath, 2025).

Recent studies on derivational morphology emphasize that derivational suffixes function to create new lexemes by changing meanings and, in some cases, grammatical categories (Lieber & Štekauer, 2018). This theoretical perspective is supported by the findings of this study, particularly in the use of suffix *-ken*. The suffix derives new verbs that express causative actions, such as *pulahken*, *nerangken*, and *mulihken*, which indicate intentional causation or affectedness. Similar patterns of derivational processes contributing to systematic verb formation have also been observed in studies on Indonesian morphology, where derivational affixes play a central role in expanding verbal lexemes and reflecting structured word-formation mechanisms (Sari et al., 2026). This correspondence demonstrates that the derivational patterns observed in Ulangen conform to established morphological theories.

The suffix *-i* also plays an important role in verbal derivation in the Karo language. The data show that suffix *-i* derives verbs expressing actions, processes, or locative meanings. Forms such as *ingani*, *hamati*, and *kawali* illustrate how derivational morphology encodes semantic relations between actions and their targets. This finding aligns with recent morphological studies that highlight the role of derivation in semantic expansion without drastic structural change (Plag, 2018). Comparable patterns of semantic expansion through derivational suffixes have been observed in news discourse, where class-changing affixes regularly produce new word-forms aligned with systematic morphological relations (Pratama & Utami, 2025). Furthermore, recent quantitative analyses of derivational morphology confirm that productive



derivational suffixes systematically encode meaning shifts while preserving structural predictability (Nugraha, 2025).

Meanwhile, the suffix *-en* is less productive but remains significant in forming nouns that express results, objects, or abstract concepts. Derived forms such as *ukumen* and *inemen* indicate that suffix *-en* functions as a nominalizer. This pattern corresponds with recent classifications of noun-forming derivational suffixes that derive resultative and abstract meanings from verbal or adjectival bases (Booij, 2017; Lieber & Štekauer, 2018). Quantitative analyses of nominalization in corpora have shown that derivational suffixes systematically contribute to noun formation across languages by encoding result and entity readings (Zakiyah, 2026). Furthermore, descriptive morphological studies demonstrate that nominalizing suffixes often retain predictable semantic functions in word-formation systems, even when their distribution is limited (Ulan & Utami, 2025). The limited distribution of this suffix suggests a more specialized morphological function within the Karo language.

Furthermore, the consistent use of derivational suffixes in the Karo Language Bible supports recent claims that translated religious texts preserve systematic grammatical and morphological structures of the target language (Nwachukwu, 2024; Malmkjær, 2018). This confirms that Ulangen provides reliable linguistic data for morphological analysis and reflects authentic derivational processes in the Karo language. The formal and standardized nature of biblical translation further enhances the stability of the morphological patterns observed. As a result, such texts offer valuable insights into the productive mechanisms of derivation in Karo.

Compared with previous studies on derivational morphology in Batak languages (Ginting & Tarigan, 2018; Ambarita et al., 2020; Ambarita et al., 2021), this study extends existing research by focusing on derivational suffixes in a religious text. While earlier studies primarily analyzed spoken or narrative texts, this research highlights derivational morphology in a formal and sacred textual context. Therefore, the findings contribute to a broader understanding of Karo morphology and demonstrate that contemporary morphological frameworks are applicable beyond Indo-European languages. This study thus reinforces the relevance of cross-linguistic morphological theory in the analysis of regional and Austronesian languages.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated derivational suffixes found in Ulangen of the Karo Language Bible through a qualitative descriptive approach. The findings reveal three types of derivational suffixes used in the text, namely suffix *-ken*, suffix *-i*, and suffix *-en*. These suffixes demonstrate distinct morphological functions and reflect systematic derivational patterns in the Karo language. Among the identified suffixes, suffix *-ken* emerges as the most dominant and productive, primarily functioning to derive verbs with causative meanings that indicate actions causing particular states or conditions. The suffix *-i* derives verbs expressing actions, processes, or locative meanings, while suffix *-en* functions as a nominalizer forming nouns that express results, objects, or abstract concepts. The distribution and functions of these suffixes indicate that derivational morphology in Karo operates through well-defined semantic and grammatical mechanisms.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings reinforce the role of derivational suffixes in creating new lexemes by modifying meanings and, in some cases, lexical categories of base words. The consistent and productive use of these suffixes in the Karo Language Bible confirms that Ulangen preserves authentic and systematic morphological structures of the target



language. Thus, this study contributes to derivational morphology by providing empirical evidence from a regional Austronesian language that supports contemporary morphological frameworks. In terms of scientific contribution, this research expands previous studies on Karo morphology by focusing on derivational suffixes within a translated religious text, a genre that has received limited attention in earlier research. The findings highlight that formal and sacred texts can serve as reliable linguistic data sources for morphological analysis, thereby broadening the scope of derivational studies beyond spoken or narrative corpora.

The implications of this study extend to both linguistic documentation and morphological theory. The documented derivational patterns contribute to the preservation and systematic description of the Karo language, particularly through the analysis of textual data. In addition, the findings offer valuable insights into cross-linguistic similarities and differences in derivational processes, especially within Austronesian languages. Future research is encouraged to explore other derivational and inflectional affixes, compare different textual genres or dialects of Karo, and employ corpus-based or quantitative approaches to further examine productivity and variation in Karo derivational morphology.

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