

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

A sentence is nothing without words. Many people think that words are the basic meaningful elements of language, but in fact many words can be broken down into smaller units with their own meaning. The smallest meaningful components of word structure are morphemes. It is in line with the opinion of Grady, saying that morpheme is the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning or function (2005: 113).

Morphemes can be classified as either free or bound. Free morpheme is a morpheme that can stand by itself and bound morpheme is a morpheme that cannot stand by itself, but it should be attached to other morphemes to form a word. Further, bound morpheme is divided into two categories namely, derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes. Derivational morphemes are either prefixes or suffixes, but inflectional morphemes are all suffixes. Inflectional morphemes adapt words to grammatical functions without changing lexical meaning as in the words *eat* and *eats*; both are verb. The word *girl* and *girls* are both noun. Inflectional morphemes are different from derivational morphemes, which usually alter the lexical meaning and part of speech of the stems to which they are added. For instance, the word *read* is a verb; but the word *readable*, which is composed of *read* and the derivational suffix *-able*, is an adjective.

Due to their segmental forms, some of those morphemes have a number of allomorphs. According to Gleason an allomorph is a variant of a morpheme that occurs in certain definable environment (1955:61). For example, the words *hats*, *bags*, and *dishes* can be written phonemically as /hæts/, /bægz/, and /dɪʒɪz/. The sounds /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/ are allomorphs of the same plural morpheme meaning 'more than one'. Besides, Nasr (1980:68) says that some other allomorphs of the morpheme meaning 'more than one' include /ən/ as in *oxen*, /rən/ as in *children*, /∅/ (zero) or no change as in *sheep: sheep*, *deer: deer* and *fish: fish*, and some instances of internal vowel change as in *man: men*, *mouse: mice*, etcetera. Another kind of allomorph, that is, suppletion is found in verb, adjective, and adverb. Suppletion is a type of morphophonemic change in which the allomorph is completely different in phonemic structure from the base. For instance, the past tense of *go* is *went*, the comparative degree of *bad* is *worse*, and the comparative degree of *well* is *better*.

Further, in terms of their conditioning factor allomorphs may be phonological or morphological (lexical) in nature. Jean Aitchison states that an allomorph is said to be phonologically conditioned when its form is dependent on the adjacent phonemes. An allomorph is said to be lexically conditioned when its form seems to be purely accidental one, linked to a particular vocabulary item (1978; 60). The allomorphs /s/, /z/, and /ɪz/ are phonologically conditioned. The form of the allomorphs here is determined by the last sound or phone of the base. The allomorph /s/ occurs after voiceless phonemes, as in *hats*. The voiceless /s/ in the word *hats* is influenced by the sound /t/, which is voiceless, too. And, the

allomorph /z/ occurs after most voiced phonemes, as in *bags*. The voiced sound /z/ in the word *bags* is influenced by the sound /g/, which is voiced, too. While, the allomorph /iz/ occurs after sibilants (hissing and hushing sounds), as in *dishes*. The allomorph /iz/ in the word *dishes* is influenced by the hissing sound /ʃ/, so it becomes hissing, too. The allomorphs /s/, /z/, and /iz/ in those words are phonologically conditioned. As mentioned previously, the selection of allomorph may also be morphologically conditioned. In this case, the selection is determined by the specific morpheme or morphemes forming the contexts, rather than by phonologic feature. The plural form of *ox* is *oxen*. *Ox* takes /ən/ because *ox* is a peculiar morpheme. Morphologically conditioned allomorphs also include the internal change of the base, as in the words *foot: feet*, *tooth: teeth*, Ø / (zero) modification, as in the words *sheep: sheep*, *deer: deer*, and suppletion, as in the words *go: went*, *good: better*, etcetera. The evidences as stated above become a phenomenon which encourages the researcher to do a research on the topic intended.

## 1.2 The Reason of Choosing the Topic

There are a lot of problems in linguistic study, especially in morphology. One of the problems is concerned with morphemes, specifically inflectional morphemes. This scope is complicated enough to comprehend. Whereas, the problems concerning the use of inflectional morphemes are often faced by English learners. The learners must be familiar with several aspects in inflectional morphemes, such as their kinds, their allomorphs and the conditioning factors of

each of the allomorphs. Consequently, this research is still regarded relevant for both the researcher and the learners of English.

### **1.3 The Statement of Problem**

Due to the topic of the discussion in this research, three problems are formulated as the following:

1. What are the kinds of inflectional morphemes used in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*?
2. What are the allomorphs of each of the inflectional morphemes found in the novel?
3. How are those allomorphs conditioned?

### **1.4 The Objective of the Study**

In line with the statement of the problem as stated above, this research accordingly aims to answer those three questions, namely:

1. To show the kinds of inflectional morphemes used in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*.
2. To describe the allomorphs of each of the inflectional morphemes found in the novel.
3. To determine the conditioning factors of each of those allomorphs.

### **1.5 The Scope of the Study**

Morphology discusses the internal structure of words which concern with the analysis of parts of speech, inflectional forms, word roots, and affixes. This research focuses its discussion on inflectional morphemes. The inflectional morphemes here are discussed in terms of their kinds, their allomorphs, and the conditioning factors of each of the allomorphs.

### **1.6 The Significance of the Study**

It is hoped that this research may contribute something valuable for the readers, especially the English learners. By reading this work, they are expected to have a good understanding on the topic discussed namely, the use of inflectional morphemes and their allomorphs.

Theoretically, this research may enrich the field of linguistic study. Practically, the findings of the study may encourage other researchers to conduct further researches on the topic seen from different points of view.

### **1.7 The Meaning of Key Terms**

To make the discussion in this study more comprehensively understandable, some key terms together with their meanings are presented below:

1. Morphology is the study of how words are structured and how they are put together from smaller parts (Monica and Joyce, 1991: 127)
2. Morphemes are the smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning and function (Grady, 2005: 113)

3. Inflectional morphemes are the morphemes which serve a purely grammatical function, never creating a new word but only a different form of the same word (Monica and Joyce, 1991: 128)
4. Allomorph is a variant of a morpheme which occurs in certain definable environment (Gleason, 1955:61)
5. *The Portrait of a Lady* is one of Henry James' novels. It was published by Macmillan Publishing Company in 1969.