1. Introduction
Able has two functions: as a word and as a suffix. As a word it functions as an adjective to modify nouns, while as a suffix it is attached to the end of a word to form derivation. Able is a living suffix, meaning that it is still used, and as according to Fowler (1988: 3) it may be appended to any transitive verbs to make a new adjective. However, this statement seems to oversimplify the fact because some intransitive verbs may also be appended by -able to make an adjective, for examples: agree -> agreeable, depend -> dependable. The suffix -able takes on another form -ible in certain circumstances without changing its function and meaning. It might be confusing, therefore, to find out that some verbs and nouns take the suffix -able while some others takes the suffix -ible. Word such as digest takes -ible -> digestible because, as a rule, a verb that can be derived into an adjective by appending the suffix -ive uses -ible. Whereas words derived from Latin intransitive ending in -are will usually take -ible; for example: educate derived from the Latin word educare -> educable.

Fowler (1988:3) states that there are, however, a large number of words that do not conform to this simple type, for example: adopt -> adoptable (although it has adoptive attribute), attributable (although attribute). Sometimes, there are pairs of adjectives ending both in -able and -ible from the same stem. According to Onin (1968:4) such pairs exist, as the alteration between -able and -ible occurs, for example: feasible, -feasible, and negligible -negligible. Sometimes, both English word and loan word (Latin, or French) survive, for instance: editable and edifice. They exist because there is a nuance of meaning in these words that makes them survive at the same time, as seen in edible "fit to be eaten, not poisonous", and edible "good to eat". Based on the theories about -able and -ible, the writer is trying to find out whether there are possibilities of explaining the uncertainty of use of -able and -ible, the variety of stems appended by the suffixes, and exceptions which are often taken. This paper is divided into three parts: the history, the form, and the rules of -able. The history describes the development of the suffix by referring back to the period of Midlate English (1200-1500) when English experienced the decay of inflectional endings causing Latin -ate to become English -ate. After the loss of inflectional ending in -able -ible. The form presents the divergence of -able and -ible and the causes of the divergence which are phonetic changes, erroneous spelling, and rules governing the suffix. The Rules further discusses why the divergence of -able and -ible occurs, by stressing more on the specific rules which closely relate to the etymology of the suffix. The paper ends with a conclusion that the writer hopes to give support to the assumption about -able and -ible.

2. History of the Suffix -able -ible
In the course of its development, English got influences from Latin, French, Scand-
The influence of French, Latin bil-
lem underwent a modification of form. It be-
came "able" (pronounced [ˈeɪbl]). French -
able has the same function as a suffix to
make new adjectives from verbal and noun
stems. Some examples below give an idea of
French adjectives ending in "-able":
affable 'polite and friendly; pleasant and easy to
talk to'
usable 'can be plugged'
believable 'credible'
capable 'having the power; ability'
formidable 'causing fear or dread'
compatible 'able to exist together'

These words ending in "-able" are not in the
inventory of the English vocabulary. The
English-adapted forms are not found in the
phonological and morphological systems. French -
able, which is pronounced [ˈeɪbl], became
English "able"-pronounced as [ˈeɪbl]. It seems
the spelling of the word remains the same.
However, the direct contact between English and Latin during the Roman
conquest and later in the Christianization of Eng-
lend gave the opportunity to Latin words and other grammatical elements such as inflec-
tional endings to find a direct way into Eng-
lisn. In this case, the process from Latin bil-
lem (or bilis) into English "able" can be ex-
plained in two ways: by the decay of inflec-
tional ending, and by the process of analogy.

2.1 The Decay of Inflectional Endings
In the period of Middle English (1100 –
1500), the inflectional ending died out. Only
few of them survived. Since then, English
has become an analytical language, in that
the relation of words as a sentence is shown
by the position of words in the sentence, no
longer by the inflectional ending.

The decay of inflectional ending involved
the whole parts of speech including adject-
ives. Bough (1960: 190) mentions that en-
dings of the noun and adjective which mark
the distinction of number and case and often of
gender were so altered in pronunciation
as to lose their distinctive form, and hence
their usefulness. This leveling of inflectional
endings was due partly to phonetic changes,
and partly to the operation of analogy. The
earliest seems to have been the change of

Humphrey N. 11 Me – Agustus 1999
final -m to -n whenever it occurred. This -n along with the -n of the other inflectional endings was dropped. At the same time, the vowels e, a, u, i in inflectional endings were obscured to a sound, the so-called "indefinite vowel", which came to be written as e. As a result, a number of originally distinct endings such as -ae, -ae, -an, -um were reduced generally to a uniform -e. It is supposed that Latin words ending in bilum and bilia, which came into English, became bi- after the inflectional ending -um and -ae were dropped. Then, the vowel i in the inflectional ending was obscured to an aceterminate vowel e so that bill brokum, ilium, the pronunciation of bil [bil] in English is mostly written as bile.

Therefore, the Latin words audibilis, eulibilis, cupabilis, risabilis, tangibilis, voluptabilis, and voluntabilis, which came into English adjectives ending in -able, -ible, can be analyzed as follows:

audibilis: dropped the inflectional ending is to become audibil. The vowel i, in the last syllable was obscured to e, so audibil. Then, this was adopted to the English spelling and form audibil.
Thus, audibilis > audibil > audibil > audibil. And enough to be heard!

eulibilis: dropped the inflectional ending is to become eulibil. The vowel i, in the inflectional ending -bil was obscured to e, so eulibil. Finally, adopted in the English spelling and form as admissible.
Thus, eulibilis > eulibil > eulibil > eulibil. Fit to be exulted.

cupabilis: dropped the inflectional ending is to become cupabilis. The vowel i, in the inflectional ending is obscured to a sound to become cupabilis, and written as cupabilis.
Thus, cupabilis > cupabilis > cupabilis. Couplable, 'capable of being 

erobbed, thieving'.

risabilis: dropped the inflectional ending is to become risabil. The vowel i, in the inflectional ending is obscured to a sound to become risabil, and written as risabil.
Thus, risabilis > risabil > risabil > risabil. Risable.

voluptabilis: dropped the inflectional ending is to become voluptabilis. The vowel i, in the inflectional ending is obscured to a sound to become voluptabilis, and written as voluptabilis.
Thus, voluptabilis > voluptabilis > voluptabilis. Volatible.

2.2 The Process of Analogy

The earlier Latin words ending in bilis, which came into English either in directly, or through French, have an established and considerably wide usage. The Latin words coming later into English took the same form and usage as the earlier ones through the process of analogy. They were converted into English without undergoing the decay of inflectional endings, in other words, "indeclinable that became 'indeclinable through the process of the decay of inflectional ending was later referred by other Latin words ending in bilis coming into English. They have the new form and usage following that of risible. For examples:

laudable, adopted from audibilis 'deserving praise'

risible, adopted from risabilis 'that can be read easily'

memorable from memorabilis 'outstanding, worthy of being remembered'

nomenclable from nomenclabilis 'able to be counted'

observable from observabilis 'capable of being observed'

palpable from palpabilis 'easily perceptible to the mind, obvious'

Later, in the development of the English language, if the need for new and better way of expressing an idea using derivative adjectives ending in -able, -ible is felt, the process of analogy is also responsible for the derivation from the native words. It is necessary to notice that the verb signifying - an was dropped when English turned into Middle English. For examples:

bear from Old English (OE) bearan + able → bearable 'that can be borne'
break from OE brew + able → breakable 'easily broken'

dross from OE drose + able → drossable 'suitable for drinking'

exit from OE eahan + able → exable 'fit to be eaten'

see from OE sean + able → seeable 'that can be seen'

shape from OE scipan + able + able → shapeable 'that can be shaped'

fame from OE faman + able + able → fableable 'that can be fabled'

It may also be the process of analogy when Latin and French words were adopted to English derivative adjectives with -able and -ible. The verbs-signifying suffixes in La-
in French -are and -er were dropped before appending the -able/-ible. For examples:

Latin taxer 'put a tax on' was adopted into English as -able /atable 'capable of being taxed'.

French touche 'became English touch + able → touchable 'that may be touched'.

Latin transformare became English transform + able → transformable 'that can be transformed'.

French transférer became English transfer + able → transferable 'that can be transferred'.

French modifer became English modify + able → modifiable 'that can be modified'.

3. Form of -able

From the Latin bilis and French, -able [abl] English has -able and -ible, which are commonly used and -ible, which is rarely used. Therefore, -ible is considered as an exception form of -able. Jespersen (1954: 398) says that borrowed words very frequently have - before -ible, and -ible (comparatively rare) before -able. In French a great many words in -ible had an a before the suffix, from stems in a Latin infinitive -are.

The divergence of -able, -ible can be explained at least in three ways: by phonetic changes, by erroneous spelling, and by the spelling rules.

3.1 Phonetic Changes

A phonetic change usually takes place for the sake of easy pronunciation. An unconscious search for greater ease of pronunciation is sometimes a cause of sound change. Jespersen (1960:404) notices that many verbs underwent considerable phonetic changes during their development from Latin through French and early English. There are pairs of despise - despisiable; destroy - destructible; explain - explicable; perceive - perceptible; and practice - practicable. These divergences in connection with the development of -able as an independent form have created a great variation in the formation and adoption of form: divisible (1552) - dividable (1592); explainable (1556) - explainable (1610); extensible (1477) - extendable; perceptible (1734) - perceivable (1547); persuasible (1580) - persuadeable (1670). These occur because the former form derives from older direct loan words, whereas the latter derives from analogies.

The reason why the phonetic changes cause such pairs of adjectives ending in -able and -ible, which sometimes used side by side, is explained by Brook (1958: 102). He argues that when a sound change takes place, the change is sometimes, but not always, recorded in spelling. Hence, after a sound change has taken place, there often occur side by side two different forms of the same words; one with a spelling representing the old pronunciation and one with a spelling representing the new pronunciation.

3.2 Erroneous Spelling

The divergence of the suffix -able and -ible may also result from an erroneous spelling. An adjective, which should be in -able, was written in -ible, or vice versa as it refers to a certain adjective similar in spelling. Gradually the erroneous spelling is accepted and gains a wide recognition as a form more commonly used, of both forms can exist side by side. Words having erroneous spelling can be looked up in the Oxford English Dictionary, for example, Old French (OF) passible, which is erroneously written careless, and now both forms exist side by side: comprehendible, which was used in earlier period, but now comprehensible.

An erroneous spelling may be due to the process of analogy as stated by Brook (1958: 20-21). He observes that when new words are taken, they are made to conform to the pattern of words that were already used, through the process of analogy. The irregularities of English spelling, as he explains further, are such that analogy often leads to variation of pronunciation or spelling. For example:

There are pretable and preventable, which can be analyzed in the following: preventable is an analogy of acceptable, admissible, and obedient, while preventible is analogically based on contemptible, permissible, and susceptible.
Forbible and forceable are given expla-
nation in the Oxford English Dictionary that
forbible is adopted from OF fornible, from
French substantival force, and forceable is
an adaptation from OF foricable, from the
verb forcer 'to force'.

Two similar words may exist side by side
when they have a shade of meaning, as Baugh (1935: 216) says that there are no
exact synonyms in English. In the use of
language people indicate a certain sense of
economy that causes them to get rid of
words whose function is fully performed by
some other words. Passible and passable in
the above example are not exactly the same
in meaning. Passible, which is from OF
passable, means 'capable of suffering or of
feeling emotion', while passable means 'of
road' capable of being travelled along'.

Forcible means 'done by force; involving the
use of force or violence'. Forceable means
'that may be forced', but the latter is group-
ed as obsolete words in the Oxford English
Dictionary.

On the other hand, preventable vs pre-
ventible, comprehensible vs comprehensi-
ble are merely variation of spelling, do not
exist side by side. They are not necessarily
to be assigned a shade of meaning. It is
suggested to use preventable and compre-
prehensible following the suggestion of Fowler
(1968: 2), based on the rule of -ible: the
final i/d is replaced by i/d before appending
-ible.

3.3 Spelling Rules of -able/-ible

The divergence of -able and -ible can be
explained by the spelling rules, as in the
following:

a. The suffix -able is appended to:
   1. Verbs, which can be formed in -ation
      (Ridout, 1970: 339). For examples:
      admire (→ admiring) → admirable
      'causing adoration'; adore (→ adora-
tion) → adorable 'delightful'.
   2. Nouns ending in -ion or -o usually
      take -able. For examples: reason
      → reasonable 'able to reason'; pension
      → pensionable 'identifiable to a pension';
      person → personable 'passing in
      manner'.

b. The suffix -ible is appended to:
   1. Verbs which take the suffix -ion in the
deviation of noun, or suffix -ive in the
derivation of adjective (Ridout, 1970: 339) usually take -ible.
      For examples: access (→ accessible) →
      'able to be reached'; digest (→ digestive) →
      digestible 'that can be digested'; admit (→ admis-
sion) → admissible 'that can be allowed'; divide (→ division) →
      divisible 'that can be divided'; reduce (→ reduc-
tion) → reducible 'that can be reduced'.

   2. It is noted that final i/d and a/d are
      transformed into /i/ and mute e is
      dropped before appending -ible.

The divergence of -ible and -ible no
longer differentiates the meaning of adver-
batives, and is merely orthographic. Moreover,
the language has a tendency toward simpli-
ity and uniformity that -able will be the
normal form. A tendency toward simplicity and
uniformity has been shown in the weakening
of strong verb. Even Fowler (1954: 2) sug-
gests that the normal form -able be used
when there is no objection to it; there is an
objection when a word is itself well-establish-
ished with -ible in general use.

Besides, the pronunciation of derivational
adjectives ending in -ible/-able has shown
the uniformity, -ible is pronounced [il],
the same as -able. For examples:

- accessible [əkˈsesəbl]
- defensible [dɪˈfensəbl]
- admissible [ədˈmɪsəbl]
- digestible [ˈdɪdʒɪstəbl]
- susable [ˈsʌsəbl]
The pronunciation of -able and -ible as [əbl] shows that in the use of language people indicate the economy, in this case the economy of energy. In the pronunciation of adjectives the tensed [ə] and [ɪ] sounds of -able and -ible become lax for the sake of easy pronunciation. Thus, [j] and [z] become a uniform sound [ð].

4. Rules of -able-ible

The divergence of -able and -ible may also be explained by the spelling rules of -able-ible, which are conveniently divided into spelling rules and specific rules of -able and -ible.

4.1 Spelling Rule

There is a set of spelling rules to be observed to make derivative adjectives ending in -able-ible. Most of the processes of derivation require changes in the spelling of the stem. The following are the rules:

a. words ending in single mute e drop the e when the suffix is appended. For examples:

create → createable that can be created achieve → achievable causing admiration

b. the adjective is rendered with a final consonant

argue → argument that can be argued argueable → argueable that can be argued

c. the adjective is rendered with a final consonant

cure → curable that can be cured

There is an exception to the dropping of mute e. Ridout (1970:339) explains that words ending in ce or ge retain the e to maintain the soft sound of [ə] and [ɪ], or when the stem ends in -es (Close, 1975:151). For examples:

service → serviceable
notice → noticiable
manage → manageable
agree → agreeable

It is also the case of a verb that has only one syllable, the e sound should be retained. For examples:

blame → blameable
rate → rateable
sale → saleable

However, some adjectives are often written as blameable, rateable, saleable, and saleable.

Blame, rate, and sale do not have the soft sound to retain so that when e is dropped, no sound quality is changed. b. To achieve brief and easy pronunciation, the longer words ending in -eable drop the -e:

Examples:

createable → createable 'that can be created'

4.2 Specific Rules of -able -ible

At the same time, the schwa [ə] can be shorn off.

humane's No. 11 Mai 1989 - Agustin 1989 79
Exception is taken to that in omitted. For examples: 
appliable - able to be applied  
joyable - able to enjoy 
play - able to play 'for play'  

a. A final y adds a vowel's remains. For examples: 
joy - able to enjoy, having charity  
play - able to play 'for play'  

f. A final i or e is replaced by if before adding -able. For examples: 
approve - able to approve of being approved by the mind or senses  
defend - able to defend oneself  
divide - able to divide 'that can be divided'  
responsible - able to be responsible  

Exception is taken by some words ending in id's or ide's, which retain the ending, and even take -able as been in the following:  
amend - able to amend 'that can be amended'  
extend - able to extend 'can be extended'  
provide - able to provide 'that can be provided'  

b. A final s is replaced by if before adding -ible when it is preceded by a con-  
tinent. For example: 
permute - able to permute 'that may be permuted'  
some - able to estimate 'that can be estimated'  
prove - able to prove 'can be proved by judicial proof'  
transmit - able to transmit 'that can be transmitted'  

Exception for this rule is taken in the following:  
extract - able to extract 'of a person' 
extradite - able to extradite 'of a crime' for which a person may be extradited  

4.2 Specific Rule  

The application of the specific rule of -able and -ible will explain why the exception is taken in the spelling rules. It explains why a certain word, instead of following the rule, does not comply to it. For example, limit which has a final l does not follow the rule (g) (final l is transformed into i) because it has another characteristic, which requires the retention of if, and takes -able instead of -ible. Whereas recommend, which should follow spelling rule if (i) (final if or ide is transformed into if before adding -ible) preserves the if, and even takes -ible. There is a characteristic that results in incompatibility to the rule (f). In the discussion, the specific rule is divided into specific rule of -able, specific rule of -ible, and specific rule of stem.  

4.2.1 Specific Rule of -able  

From the data analysis, it is found that the suffix -able is appended to words with the following characteristics:  
a. verbs whose derivation the noun uses one of the suffixes -ance, -ant, -ant, -age, or -ment. For examples: with the suffix -ance:  
accept (acceptance) acceptable (worth accepting)  
equal that can be equalized 'can be avoided'  
with the suffix -ant  
dispute (disputer) disputable (can be disputed)  
steer (steering) steerable (can be steered)  
trivial (of trivium) can be laughed  
amuse 'can be used'  
with the suffix -age:  
indust (industrious) indicable (liable to be indicated)  
equal that can be adjusted
b. foreign borrowing.

Many English adjectives in -ible are from Latin words ending in -ibilis, or French words ending in -ible. Sometimes, they do not comply to the spelling rules of -ible previously discussed because they followed the Latin or French rules before the borrowing into English. Their form of -ible in English now is in a matter of adaptation to the English spelling. For examples:

equatable (L) → equatable 'equal to', having equal value
indeterminate (L) → indeterminate 'cannot be determined'
irrelevant (L) → irrelevant 'not applicable to matter'

4.1.2 Specific Rule of -ible

a. is used with a verb that can be changed into a noun using -ation, or into an adjective using -ive. For examples with -en:

access (as a noun) → accessible 'able to be used, reachable'

b. with foreign borrowing

Latin words ending in -ibilis became English adjectives ending in -ible. These words do not conform to the rule of -ible, because they followed Latin rules. According to Fowkes (1968: 2) these Latin adjectives were usually derived from verbs ending in -ere or -ire. For examples:

cure to hear → able to hear

dice to eat → able to eat

dicate to do → able to indicate

dicewho to say → able to say

diceware to see → able to see

4.2.3 Specific Rule of Stem

a. Verb as Stem

The suffix -ible is a living suffix and may be appended to any transitive verb. Hence, it is free to make new derivative adjectives ending in -ible when it is necessary to express an idea. For examples:

accept + able → acceptable 'worth accepting'
face + able → faceable 'that can be borne or endured'

b. with foreign borrowing

The analysis shows some of them:

agree + able → agreeable 'pleasing, giving pleasure, ready to agree'
desire + able → desirable 'that may be desired on'

laugh + able → laughable 'causing person to laugh'

These intransitive verbs are usually used together with preposition and its object, intransitive verbs that do not go with preposition and objects are not usually formed into adjectives in -ible. The reason is that the frequent usage of derivative adjectives ending in -ible is in passive sense of meaning expressed by that can be . Therefore, intransitive verbs without preposition and object cannot be converted into passive form. For example, He is sleeping; the word sleep applies only to the subject He. It is not doing anything to anyone or anything else (Ballot, 1970:161), so that sleep does not have a passive form. Other examples are:

cry + able → cryable

groan + able → groanable

HUMANOSCIE No. 11 May - Agustus 1998
b. Noun as Stem

Noun may be changed into adjectives with -able/-ible. Jespersen (1954:412) argues that English and French had words in -able/-ible from Latin noun animalium (English: amiable; French: amiable) derived from the Latin "friend, companion" and amis (French: amiable). In English, there are some derivational adjectives ending in -able/-ible derived from nouns such as comfortable and habitable, which lead to the possibility to form adjectives ending in -able/-ible from nouns. For examples:

- companion, person, goes with: *companionable* friendly
- person, an individual human being: *personable* pleasing in manner
- action: "government" + adjective "going wrong for an animal at law"
- size + adjective "rather large"

Denote the possibility of forming adjectives from nouns, this -able reveals a shift of meaning: The meanings of action, person, companion, and size are quite different from the new meanings in the derivational adjectives.

5. Conclusion

- Able is originally from Latin -abilis, one of the inflections of -abilis to form adjectives in cases where a Latin infinitive ends in -are in cases where the infinitive ends in -are, or in -i -abilis takes over the -abilis Latin -abilis and -ible become English -able and -ible, and continue to be productive suffixes to form adjectives.

- Able and -ible become -able through the decay of inflectional ending during the period of Middle English (1130 – 1500). After the decay of inflectional ending ceased, -able and -ible maintain their form by the process of analogy.

- The rules of -able and -ible are not rigid since the interference of the process of analogy, phonetic changes, and erroneous spelling, which caused word formation, makes some words deviate from the rules.

The analysis shows that the divergence of -able/-ible is merely orthographic. It causes no distinction in meaning. Once, there was a preference to use -able to achieve uniformity of sound, and later in the development of English, the normal form -able should be used when there is no objection to it. Apart from that, the process of uniformity of -able and -ible is achieved through the uniformity of pronunciation: both are similarly pronounced as [i]. Formerly, -ible was pronounced [ible] as in permissible and admissible, but apparently people indicate a sense of economy in the use of language that the formed sound of -ible becomes last [i].

BIBLIOGRAPHY


HumaNika No. 11 Mei – Agustus 1999