



## Strategies for Developing Teaching Morphology among ESL Learners at University Level: A case Study, English language Learners at Faculty Of Arts and Humanities at University of Gezira (2021-2022)

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### Abstract

This study aims to develop the strategies for teaching morphology among ESL Learners at University Level, to draw the attention to the importance of developing and teaching morphology as a medium for helping learners in general. The researchers used descriptive analytical method of analysis data. The pre and post written tests were carefully constructed, and then it was distributed among the study sample which consisted of (50) students who were purposively selected. The researchers used SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) program for analyzing the data yielded from the focus group. The study revealed that learners' cognitive deficit in morphology is due to the lack of salient teaching technique. Learning the new words by means of synonyms and antonyms made morphemes clearer and understandable. Using morphological items into context has developed learners' comprehension level and reading skills. The study recommended that teachers should be varied in teaching techniques of morphology by integrating visual aids, sound based on system to motivate their learners and students should be increased their vocabulary stocks to promote their morphological awareness.

**Keywords:** inflectional, derivational morphemes, morphological awareness, Morphology, Educational Research.

### Introduction

During the last two decades, a great number of people came in advance to study the English language attribute of its' significance and widespread throughout continents, which opened a corpus of studies and researches in the English language called linguistics. Many disciplines fall within its' field such as sociolinguistics, computational linguistics, historical linguistics, applied linguistics, and psycholinguistics. This study focuses on developmental aspects of morphology, hence, various subfields fall within it's' scope involving on the extraction of orthography, phonology semantics, morphological information in printed texts, and so forth. All the above -mentioned areas are regarded as branches of psycholinguistics. Therefore, this study concentrates on developing teaching morphology from perspective of form and function, taking into accounts the retrieval recognition, origin of morphemes and classification of regular and irregular morphemes. Moreover, it also points to the uses of inflectional and derivational morphemes, as well as strengthening and promoting learners understanding to infer the meanings from comprehension passages and contexts. Thus, the researchers will study the psychological features of morphemes from the perspectives of recognition, retrieval, and analyze its impact on EFL learners' language skills.

**Statement of the Problem:** According to the researcher's teaching experience at secondary schools and university, observed that ESL learners have many shortcomings in the psycholinguistics field, especially in morphology, which were perceived in their reading comprehension, composition writing, and weak interaction at lectures. Also, the researchers noted that most ESL learners mismatch morphemes and lexical entries in affixes whether regular or irregular nature. The mentioned aspects show that there is something wrong somewhere which requires an investigation.

### Objectives of the Study:

1. This study is heading at steering EFL learners' awareness of the modern dictionary which involves function, form, and uses.
2. Shed the light on the origin of Latin and Greek morpheme features

### Hypotheses of the Study:

1. By the use of modern dictionaries Teachers might steer ESL learners' awareness toward morphology.
2. Explaining the origin of some Latin and Greek morphemes to ESL learners' might make easy access to the given text.

### Question of the Study:

1. What is an appropriate modern dictionary for steering learner's morphological awareness?
2. What is the impact of Latin and Greek morphemes on EFL learner's comprehension?

### **Significance of the Study:**

This paper acquires its' importance from the field of the study "morphology" under the umbrella of psycholinguistics which constitutes the backbone of linguistic studies. It may also acquire its importance from interdisciplinary fields of linguistics with morphology such as syntax, orthography, and phonology, for more advancement in linguistic studies. This study is important for the researchers as well as language teachers at secondary and university level, for more promotion in teaching techniques and strategies. Moreover, the departments of English language might benefit from this study; because it sheds light on the problems and hindrances of ESL learners to the most significant aspects of morphology.

### **Methodology:**

The researchers adopt the descriptive - analytical method. A written pre-test and post-test for (50) undergrads Students at the University of Gezira Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences as a sample of the study .The researchers used the SPSS program for data analysis.

### **Delimitations of the Study:**

The limitations of this study is at Gezira University , it involves faculty of Arts and human Sciences as sample for the study , the duration of this study will take place between 2021-2022.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Principles for Teaching Morphology**

Researchers have to realize that if students are able to identify prefixes, suffixes, and root words, they would build a larger vocabulary and improve reading comprehension. Keiffer and Lesaux (2007, 139-142) suggest that: morphology instruction should be included in language and literacy programs. Kieffer and Lesaux suggested four principles for teaching morphology to improve learners' vocabulary and reading comprehension

Principle 1: Teach morphology in the context of rich, explicit vocabulary instruction when students encounter an unfamiliar word, they need to complete the following steps:

Step 1: Recognize that they do not know the word. Step 2: Analyze the word. Looking for identifiable morphemes, in the roots and suffixes. Step 3: Think of a possible meaning depend on the parts of the word. Step 4: Checking the meaning against context ideas.

Principle 2: Teach the underlying morphological knowledge needed in two ways — both explicitly and in context. Learners need to comprehend the usage of affixes, and roots, then how words get transformed.

Principle 3: For students with developed knowledge of Spanish, teach morphology in relation to cognate instruction (words with similar meaning and spelling in both languages.(ibid)

#### **Strategies in Developing Teaching Morphology**

1. Utilizing word families: One effective strategy is to teach students about word families, which are groups of words that share the same root/base word. For example, words like happy, happiness, and happily are all part of the same word family. By teaching students about word families, they can understand how adding prefixes, suffixes, or changing the base word alters the meaning of the words. (Bowerman, 2018)

2. Explicit instruction: Another strategy is to explicitly teach students about morphemes, the smallest meaningful units in language. Teaching students about prefixes, suffixes, and root words allows them to understand the meaning and function of each morpheme. For example, teaching students that the prefix "un-" changes the meaning of a word to its opposite, or that the suffix "-ful" adds the meaning of "full of" to a word. (Nagy, 2013)

3. Vocabulary games and activities: Engaging students in interactive vocabulary games and activities can help reinforce their understanding of morphology. For example, activities like word building, where students create new words by combining root words with different prefixes or suffixes, can be an effective way to help students practice and apply their knowledge of morphemes. (Henry, 2019)

4. Contextualized instruction: It is important to teach morphology in a contextualized manner. Providing students with meaningful examples and real-world connections to the words they are learning can enhance their understanding and retention of the morphological concepts. For instance, showing students how the knowledge of word parts helps them to decipher the meaning of unfamiliar words in the texts they read can be a powerful tool for comprehension and vocabulary development. (Carlisle, 2010)

5. Word analysis tasks: Engaging students in analyzing unfamiliar words by breaking them down into their constituent morphemes can improve their vocabulary development. Such tasks involve identifying prefixes, suffixes, and root words in order to determine the overall meaning of the word. Regular practice with word analysis tasks can enhance students' ability to decode new words and expand their morphological awareness. (Reed, 2013).

#### **Vocabulary and Lexis**

Given the central role of vocabulary and lexis as carrier content in ESP, also confirmed by different authors, for example Robinson (1991, p. 4) who says that:

*"It may often be thought that a characteristic, or even a critical feature, of ESP is that a course should involve specialist language (especially terminology) and content."*

### **The Cognitive Revolution in Psychology**

The review of Chomsky still holds that the human ability to use syntax is qualitatively different from any sort of animal communication; this ability may have resulted from a favorable mutation or from an adaptation of skills evolved for others purposes.

Anderson (1998) Comments in this notion by saying that: The theory of language that serves group needs. Better linguistic expressions may have produced more cohesion, cooperation, and potential for survival. The con view still holds that that language –including syntax – is an outgrowth of hundreds of thousands of years of increasing intelligence and tens of thousands of years of human interaction. Contemporary theories besides Chomsky, working in the field of theories of psycholinguistics includes George Lack off and Steven Pinker. More recently, psycholinguists have recognized the importance of extending the study of language processing to individuals who are acquiring or actively using more than one language.(ibid) .Bilinguals out number monolinguals in the world's population, bilinguals more than monolinguals provide a genially universal account of the cognitive mechanisms that underline language performance Schmitt (2002, 133-149) state that: *"The use of two or more languages provide a powerful tool for investigating issues of cognitive representation and processing that are otherwise hidden from view"*

1- Specific questions with respect to bilinguals are Is L2 acquisition different from L1 acquisition?

2- To what extent does the L1 play a role in using the L2?

3- Are there rules governing code-switching (the use of More than one language in an utterance)?

4- How do speakers of more than one language keep the two languages apart?

5- How are languages acquired at some point in time Lost or maintained over time?

According to Schmitt (2002, pp.133-137) is framed by an important set of assumption about language and cognition.

*"it is assumed that the cognitive process that are revealed as individuals acquire proficiency in a second language share a common bases with the process that are in place for competent bilinguals"*

Bates et.al (1995, p.96) posted their definition as: The other significance of studying of psycholinguistics is that it uncovers universal processes that govern the development, use, and breakdowns of language.

### **Developing Teaching Morphology**

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### **Morphological Development**

Linguistic theories assume that words (and the sub-word units called morphemes) encode (i.e., are associated with) units of meaning, such that the word 'units' is composed from two morphemes (the morpheme 'unit' and the morpheme's', and the word 'morphemes' composed from three ('morph', 'eme' and 's'). From this view, the task encounter a language learner consist of learning what the conceptual units of her language are, learning how to associate them with sound units to create morphemes, and figuring out the kinds of morphemes that can be combined to form complex words, along with how sequences of morphemic combinations combine to yield more complex sentences.

### **Derivational Morphology in First Language Acquisition**

The notion of (L1) acquisition discussed by Koda (2008). Morphemes are the smallest unit in a meaning of word. L1 speakers have to acquire both roots—i.e., the part of a word carrying lexical meaning—and affixes. Whereas acquisition of free roots is the same as vocabulary acquisition, the acquisition of affixes is not necessarily equivalent. Therefore, a theory of morphemes smaller than the free root is needed. Derivational morphemes provide lexical meaning, such as the Spanish agentive suffix–ero in molinero, 'miller,' whereas inflectional morphemes supply grammatical information, such as the plural marker –s in molineros, 'millers.' Sometimes, the division between derivational and inflectional morphemes is not very sharp, as in the case of appreciative suffixes, e.g., the derivational suffix –ito, '-let.' Prototypical derivational suffixes, however, are those that can coin new words as well as potentially change the syntactic category of the root. (ibid)

In the case of morphological awareness Kuo & Anderson (2006) add this notion, is crucial to learning since it allows learners to identify grammatical categories, such as nouns or adjectives, infer the meaning of unfamiliar words, and access stored lexical information. For example, if an English reader comes across the word toleration in a text but does not know its meaning, that reader can still recognize its word category because the suffix -ion is found at the end of countless other English nouns. For the third aspect, a learner needs to have independently stored each derivational affix with its syntactic and distributional information in the mental lexicon. This knowledge can be considered the grammatical knowledge of each affix. Although this knowledge does not necessarily presuppose a rule-governed system, such a system might be helpful to understand the relationship between affixes and roots.

Moreover, it is under discussion whether the syntactic features are available before the word semantics are activated) Malinge and Koenig (2007) have demonstrated, word category can prime target words, which indicates that syntactic

information is very much present in the representation of an individual word. The psychological reality of affixes does not pose any threat to the construct of awareness and Meta linguistic knowledge since these are explicit and conscious kinds of knowledge. As conscious knowledge, affixes are clearly independent of words as can be seen in multiple neologisms created by L1 and L2 learners and in the ability of learners to recognize an unknown word by its parts. (ibid)

**Morphological Development in Foreign Language Learning** Inflectional and derivational morphology are part of the target language inside class. Marcos Miguel (2012) confirms that: Training on inflectional morphology is a must, although this training does not immediately lead to mastery in production. For example, studies on development of verbal morphology have shown that learning the morphological expression of tense and aspect evolves slowly and gradually .In fact, there is often a mismatch between form knowledge—e.g., using a default inflected verb—versus usage knowledge—e.g., using the necessary markers of tense and aspect. Moreover, learners tend to show a greater knowledge of irregular verbal forms than of regular forms. In spite of these tendencies, L2 learners are almost always able to explain the rules behind an inflectional paradigm. Even though each L1 influences the level of L2 morphological awareness differently—i.e., there is always a different dual language involvement (Koda, 2008)—it can be assumed that inflectional paradigms are easily learnt by all second language learners due to its regularities. With derivational knowledge, it is much harder to describe a mismatch, or lack thereof, between production/reception and explicit knowledge, given that derivational morphology is scarcely addressed in the classroom. Furthermore, with another production task named the Test of English Derivatives, Schmitt and Zimmermann (2002) showed that learners of L2 English often only know two members of a word family, namely a noun and a verb, rather than any adjectives or adverbs. , recognizing a word does not automatically supported knowledge of a whole word family. For instance, knowing the noun significance does not imply knowing the adjective significant.(ibid) .

**Methodology**

The researchers adopted descriptive and analytical methods and identified sample procedures.

**The Population of Study**

The populations of this study are undergrads students at the Gezira University.

**The Sample of the Study:** The sample of this study consisted of undergrads students at faculty of Arts and Human sciences .They were 50 students selected randomly; the researchers choose them as a sample for undergrads students at tertiary level were Fifty.

**Research Methodology**

The researchers used test as a tool in collecting the data of this study is a test, which designed for undergrads students. It involves eight questions through it the researchers illustrated students responses. Therefore, the respondents were given enough time to make ticks upon the options, or respond to questions in which they believe it is suitable. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences Program (SPSS) is used as a tool for data analysis.

**Reliability**

The reliability of test refers to its consistency in producing stable and repeatable results over time. A reliable test yields similar results, ensuring accuracy and dependability in a measurements.

**Validity :** The test was checked precisely by the number of teachers and experts in the departments of English language faculties of Arts and Educations they were specialized in language testing and who have an experiences applied linguistic after piloting, necessary changes was made on the test. All of them agreed that the test valid for the purpose of the study.

**Results and Discussion**

**Test Analysis**

After the test monitored by some experts in the field of applied linguistic and testing so that test takers are subdue for it in two terms, pre- test and post-test, taking into considerations time, place and scoring, therefore the test is divided into three parts matching, vocabulary within the context and words recognition.

**4.1.1 Part one: Match the definition with words:**

<b>syllable</b>	Part of a word pronounced as a unit.
<b>prefix</b>	A word from which other words are made.
<b>Base word</b>	A syllable added to the beginning of a word which changes the word’s meaning.

The researchers make an analysis to this part which requires from the students to match the definition with a word that fit it, so as to pave the way for the topic, but most of the respondents did not answer it as well, this can be viewed in the results of pre-test which comes as follows 4% pass 96% fail whereas in the post-test 36% pass 64% fail, this result denotes that the students haven't any background about the given items.

**4.1.2 Part Two: Vocabulary Fill in with the Correct Word.**

Unique	Unity	Unison	Union	Unicycle
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I .The child found something very.....while he was hunting for arrowheads at the cave.

2. The clown at the circus was very skilled at riding the.....around the ring.
3. The 4th and5th graders last year sang in.....during the concert.
4. The.....of the groups on the playground made recess run smoothly.
5. After the Civil War, the North and the South had to form .....in order to keep our country strong.

According to the above questions the students are asked to recognize the word which goes with sentence, so their responses come as follows: In Pre- test 80% respondents fail 20% pass at the post-test 36% pass whereas, 64% fail, this result confirms that the students have a deficiencies in the mentioned area.

**What does each prefix mean? Write a word that has the prefix. Lastly, write a sentence that shows the meaning of the word.**

- dis-means..... Example:.....Sentence:.....
- pre means..... Example:.....Sentence:.....
- sub- means..... Example:..... Sentence:.....
- anti-means .....Example:..... Sentence:.....
- re- means..... Example:.....Sentence: .....

In concern with this question exactly the students are asked to identify the prefix and support it with an example and put it in a sentence, the results come as follow: pre-test 4% pass 96% fail, and post-test 28 pass 72% fail, it noteworthy, most of the respondents did not answer it properly.

**A Part Three: Root Words**

A- Please read each word below and then write the prefix of each word in the first column and then the root word second column.

	Prefix	root word
Unbroken		
Misplace		
Prepare		
Repay		
Intranet		
Intersect		
Disinfect		
Supervise		
Antibacterial		
Recover		

In this part the students were asked to discriminate between the root words and stem therefore, in the pre-test 8% pass and 92% fail at the post- test36% pass and 64% fail this result assured that the student disable to distinguish between roots and stem of morphological items.

**B-Complete the sentences with the correct form of the adverb. In which examples dose the meaning alter significantly?**

hard hardly

1) A- We all work extremely.....

B- Some countries can..... feed **their own people**.

easy easily

2) A- Manchester won the match.....

B- Relax take it.....

Late lately

3) A- I hate it when people arrive.....

B- What have you been doing .....

Sure surely

4) A- Can you lend me some money?.....

B- .....you can see that **your plan just wouldn't work?**

Wrongly wrong

5) A-He was .....accused of being a spy.

Taking into account this question which is closely connected with recognition the morphological words according to the parts of speech for the give text, it is notably, from pre- test result that 60% pass and 40% at the same time the

scores of post-test are 72% pass and 28% fail which confirm to the greater degree they did well, comparing with previous questions.

**C- Choose the option you think it appropriate**

**A- What aspects are necessary for learning English?**

1- Vocabulary 2- Grammar 3- Phrases 4- Reading comprehension

**B- What aspects of problems you have in learning morphological items?**

1- Recognition of lexis 2- Comprehension of the lexis 3- Retrieval of the lexis 4- Derivations and inflections of lexis

**C- Which language skills do you most frequently use in dealing with morphological aspects?** 1- Words class 2- Parts of speech 3- Affixes and roots

**D- What technique of vocabulary learning strategy do you adopt to discover the meanings of new English vocabulary?**

1- Synonyms 2- Antonyms 3- Derivations 4- Inflections

**E- What morphology learning strategies do you employ to recall newly-learned English vocabulary items?**

1- Memorization 2- By using it in context 3- Synonyms and antonyms 4- Through listening

The last part of this test is designed as a questionnaire through which students are going to select the option which they think it's appropriate, consequently, the analysis is done to each statement individually from 1-5 involving pre- and post- test as follows:

**4.2.1 A- What Aspects are Necessary for Learning English?**

**Pre-test result**

Statements	1vocabulary	2-Grammar	3- Phrases	4- Reading comprehension
No of frequency	7	14	1	3
Percentage	28%	56%	4%	12%
Total No	25	25	25	25

**4.2.2 Post-test result:**

Statements	1-vocabulary	2-Grammar	3-Phrases	4- Reading comprehension
No of frequency	9	4	1	11
Percentage	36%	16%	4%	44%
Total No	25	25	25	25

In concern with this statement, students in the pre-test, (28%) sign vocabulary, (56%) Grammar, (4%) phrases, and 12% reading comprehension, and for the post- test 36% sign vocabulary, (16%) Grammar, (4%) phrases, and (44%) reading comprehension, this result indicate that most of the students select comprehension .

**B- What aspects of problems you have in learning morphological items?**

**Pre-test result:**

Statements	1- Recognition of lexis	2- Comprehension of the lexis	3- Retrieval of the lexis	4- Derivations and inflections of lexis
No of frequency	6	7	3	9
Percentage	24%	28%	12%	36%
Total No	25	25	25	25

**Post-test result:**

Statements	1- Recognition of lexis	2- Comprehension of the lexis	3- Retrieval of the lexis	4- Derivations and inflections of lexis
No of frequency	3	8	5	9
Percentage	12%	32%	20%	36%
Total No	25	25	25	25

Having look at the above statement, students in the pre-test (24 %) sign Recognition of lexis, (28 %) Comprehension of the lexis 12 % Retrieval of the lexis, and (36 %) Derivations and inflections of lexis, and for the post- test (12 %) sign Recognition of lexis, (32 %) Comprehension of the lexis, (20 %) Retrieval of the lexis, and, and (36 %) Derivations and inflections of lexis, this result indicate that most of the students decide on derivations and inflections of lexis.

**C- Which language skills do you most frequently use in dealing with morphological aspects? Pre-test result:**

Statements	1- Words class	2-Parts of speech	3- Affixes and roots
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No of frequency	5	18	2
Percentage	20%	72%	8%
Total No	25	25	25

**Pre-test result:**

Statements	1- Words class	2-Parts of speech	3- Affixes and roots
No of frequency	7	12	6
Percentage	28%	48%	24%
Total No	25	25	25

With reference to above mentioned statement, students in the pre-test (20 %) sign Words class, (72 %) Parts of speech, (8 %) Affixes and roots, and for the post- test (28 %) Words class, 48 % Parts of speech, (24 %) Affixes and roots, this result point toward parts of speech.

**D- What technique of vocabulary learning strategy do you adopts to discover the meanings of new English vocabulary? Pre-test result:**

Statements	1- Synonyms	2- Antonyms	3- Derivations	4- Inflections
No of frequency	11	5	5	4
Percentage	44%	20%	20%	16%
Total No	25	25	25	25

**Post-test result:-**

Statements	1- Synonyms	2- Antonyms	3- Derivations	4- Inflections
No of frequency	9	4	8	4
Percentage	36%	16%	32%	16%
Total No	25	25	25	25

Taking glance at the above statement, students in the pre-test (44 %) sign Synonyms, (20 %) Antonyms, (20 %) Derivations, and (16 %) Inflections, and for the post- test 36 % sign Synonyms, (16 %) Antonyms, 32 % Derivations, and (16 %) Inflections, this outcome point to synonyms.

**E- What morphology learning strategies do you employ to recall newly-learned English vocabulary items? Pre-test result:**

Statements	1-Memorization	2- By using it in context	3- Synonyms and antonyms	4- Through listening
No of frequency	8	5	4	8
Percentage	32%	20%	16%	32%
Total No	25	25	25	25

**Post-test result:**

Statements	1-Memorization	2- By using it in context	3- Synonyms and antonyms	4- Through listening
No of frequency	3	3	7	12
Percentage	12%	12%	28%	48%
Total No	25	25	25	25

Viewing the above statement, students in the pre-test (32%)sign Memorization, (24 %)By using it in context, (12 %)Synonyms and antonyms, and (32%)Through listening, and for the post- test (12 %) sign Memorization,(12%) .By using it in context, 28 % Synonyms and antonyms, and 48 % Through listening, These results show that most of the students choose comprehension.

**Conclusion**

The researchers conducted this study under the title (Strategies for developing and Teaching Morphology among ESL Learners' Language Skills) after making an analysis developing to the data the researchers reached to the findings

**Findings**

1. Learning the new words by means of synonyms and antonyms made morphemes clearer and understandable.

2. Using modern dictionaries, matching and memorizing games will enhanced learner's vocabulary stock.
3. Through learning parts of speech learners were able to understand the morphological components, which built up their comprehension skill.
4. Segmentation of morphology into affixes (prefixes, suffixes and infixes), roots or base words and explaining them with examples improved learner's skills of comprehension.
5. the most frequently problems of learners in morphology were derivations and inflections.
6. By explaining the origin of Latin and Greek morphemes learners make easy access to the given text.
7. Presenting morphological features through audiovisual means raise student's motivation.
8. guessing the meanings of the new words by analyzing their affixes and roots solve learner's difficulties in morphology of comprehension.
9. Recognizing the meanings in grammatical structures of morpheme aspects build clear vision toward morphology.
10. Remembering words by grouping them according to synonyms and antonyms, make morphemic features understandable.

**Recommendations:**

1. Teachers should vary in teaching techniques of morphology by integrating visual aids, sound base system to motivate their learners.
2. Students should be increased their vocabulary stocks to promote their morphological awareness.
3. Teachers ought to hint for unfamiliar and irregular morphemes during lectures or lessons.
4. EFL learners should be promoted their morphological awareness through reading habits.

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