

MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE GRAMMAR ACQUISITION IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL WITH HELP OF DIGITAL TOOLS

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Abstract: *Morphological awareness, defined as the conscious recognition and manipulation of word structures, plays a crucial role in foreign language grammar acquisition among secondary school learners. This study explores how understanding morphemes roots, prefixes, and suffixes affects students' ability to comprehend and produce grammatically accurate sentences. The paper reviews theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and practical strategies for integrating morphology focused instruction into language classrooms. Findings suggest that enhancing morphological awareness improves vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and overall grammatical competence. Recommendations for teachers include targeted exercises in derivational and inflectional morphology, contextualized practice, and the use of interactive tools to support active learning.*

Keywords: *Morphological Awareness, Foreign Language Acquisition, Grammar Learning, Secondary School Students, Derivational Morphology, Inflectional Morphology, Vocabulary Development, Language Instruction.*

Foreign language acquisition is a multifaceted process, encompassing phonological, syntactic, semantic, and morphological dimensions. Among these, morphological awareness the ability to recognize, analyze, and manipulate the smallest units of meaning in a language, such as roots, prefixes, and suffixes has emerged as a significant predictor of grammatical competence. Secondary school learners, who are at a critical stage of cognitive and linguistic development, can benefit from targeted morphological instruction to enhance their understanding of complex grammatical structures.

Theoretical Background

Morphological awareness is rooted in the broader field of metalinguistic knowledge, which enables learners to reflect on and manipulate language structures consciously. Researchers such as Carlisle (2000) argue that morphological awareness supports vocabulary expansion, reading comprehension, and syntactic proficiency. In the context of foreign language learning, it facilitates the understanding of verb conjugations, noun declensions, and the formation of adjectives and adverbs key components of grammar mastery.

There are two main types of morphological awareness:

1. Derivational awareness - understanding how new words are formed from base words (e.g., happy → happiness).
2. Inflectional awareness - recognizing grammatical changes in words to indicate tense, number, gender, or case (e.g., walk → walked).

Both types are essential for secondary learners, as they underpin the acquisition of accurate and contextually appropriate grammar.

Morphological Awareness and Grammar Acquisition

Research indicates a strong link between morphological awareness and grammar acquisition in foreign languages. Learners who can decompose words into morphemes tend to: Recognize grammatical patterns more efficiently. Apply correct verb conjugations and noun-adjective agreements. Understand the nuances of tense, aspect, and mood in sentences. Expand vocabulary, which indirectly supports grammatical understanding. For example, a student learning English as a foreign language may struggle with the past tense if they lack awareness of the "-ed" suffix. Similarly, understanding derivational morphology can help learners form adjectives from nouns (e.g., care→ careful) and thus produce grammatically correct sentences.

Empirical Evidence

Several studies have confirmed the positive impact of morphological instruction on foreign language grammar. Bowers et al. (2010) found that secondary school learners who received explicit training in morphological patterns outperformed peers in grammar tests. Similarly, Anglin (1993) demonstrated that morphological awareness contributes significantly to reading comprehension, which is closely linked to syntactic and grammatical skills.

Furthermore, classroom interventions focusing on morphological analysis such as word decomposition exercises, morpheme mapping, and affix recognition have been shown to improve both writing accuracy and oral production in foreign language learners.

Practical Applications of Morphological Awareness in Grammar Instruction

1. Integrating Morphological Analysis into Lessons

One of the most effective ways to enhance morphological awareness is through structured analysis of word forms. Teachers can introduce exercises where students break down complex words into roots, prefixes, and suffixes. For example: Activity: Take the word unbelievable. Ask students to identify the root (believe), the prefix (un-), and the suffix (-able), then discuss how each morpheme contributes to the overall meaning. Objective: This exercise improves both vocabulary and grammatical understanding, as students learn to manipulate word forms in context.

2. Derivational Morphology Activities

Derivational morphology helps learners create new words and expand their grammatical range. Secondary school learners can practice forming nouns, adjectives, and verbs from a common root. Example Exercise: Provide a list of base words (e.g., act, create, help) and ask students to generate related words using derivational morphemes (e.g., action, creative, helpful). Outcome: Learners understand patterns of word formation and how to adjust words according to grammatical requirements in sentences.

3. Inflectional Morphology Drills

Inflectional morphemes are crucial for verb conjugation, pluralization, and agreement in sentences. Teaching these explicitly helps learners construct grammatically accurate sentences. Activity: Create tables for regular and irregular verbs in the target language. Ask students to fill in missing forms or transform sentences from present to past, singular to plural, etc. Example: For the verb go: I go → He goes → They went. Students note how inflection changes the verb form depending on tense and subject.

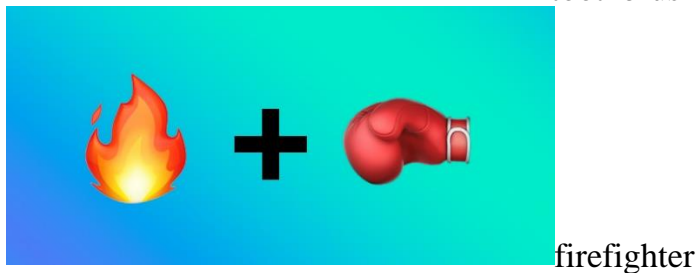
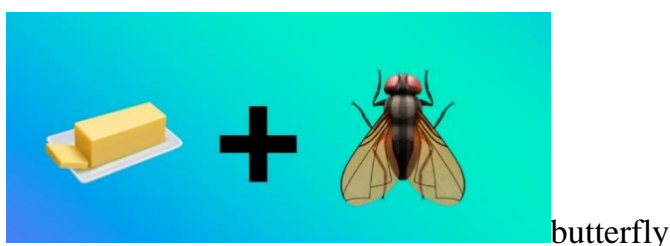
4. Morphology in Reading and Writing Tasks

Integrating morphology into authentic reading and writing tasks can enhance grammar acquisition: Reading: Highlight morphemes in a text and ask students to predict the meaning of unfamiliar words. Writing: Assign tasks where students must create sentences using words derived from a common root or affix.

5. Use of Digital Tools and Games

Interactive tools can make morphology learning engaging: Online quizzes that match prefixes/suffixes with base words. Word-building games where students compete to create new words correctly. Flashcards with morphemes on one side and meanings on the other. These activities promote active engagement and reinforce grammatical rules naturally, rather than through rote memorization.

Teaching compound nouns with help of pictures very helpful. Some samples of below shows clear instruction for creating new words on basis of two words to the students.



Challenges and Considerations

While morphological awareness is highly beneficial, some challenges must be addressed:

1. Varied Learner Proficiency: Students may differ in their prior vocabulary knowledge, which affects their ability to recognize morphemes.
2. Language-Specific Morphology: Foreign languages differ in their morphological complexity; English has relatively simple inflectional rules but rich derivational patterns, while languages like Russian or Turkish have more complex inflections. Teachers should adapt exercises to the specific language.
3. Cognitive Load: Excessive focus on morphological analysis can overwhelm learners. Gradual scaffolding and contextualized practice are essential.

Recommendations for Educators

1. Start Simple: Begin with high-frequency morphemes before introducing less common or irregular forms.
2. Contextualize Learning: Always relate morpheme exercises to sentences or texts to reinforce grammatical application.
3. Encourage Reflection: Ask students to compare word forms and identify patterns across the language.
4. Combine Skills: Integrate morphology with reading, writing, listening, and speaking to enhance overall language competence.
5. Monitor Progress: Use formative assessments to track how morphological awareness influences grammar mastery over time.

Morphological awareness is a powerful tool in foreign language grammar acquisition for secondary school learners. By consciously analyzing and manipulating morphemes, students not only expand their vocabulary but also develop a deeper understanding of grammatical rules. Practical strategies-ranging from decomposition exercises and derivational/inflectional drills to digital games-can be seamlessly integrated into the classroom. For teachers, fostering morphological awareness is not just about teaching word parts; it is about equipping learners with a framework to decode, construct, and confidently use the language. Ultimately, investing in morphology-focused instruction can bridge the gap between passive knowledge of words and active, grammatically accurate language use-a key goal for any secondary school foreign language program.

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