Analysis of Students’ Morphological Awareness

Waad Dawood Naser¹, Nilotpala Gandhi²

¹PhD. Research Scholar, School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India
²Gujarat University Linguistics Department, Gujarat, Ahmedabad, India
Email: Wadd796wjj@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Morphological awareness has attracted much interest by linguists and language teachers lately. The reason behind this is the evident role of morphology in the process of learning a language. According to Sénéchal et al. (2008) morphology, along with grammar and syntax is the most essential tool to effectively learn and acquire a language. Morphological awareness refers to the understanding of words through its meaning and various formations that leads to new word formations and vocabulary development (Kuo & Anderson, 2006). Morphological awareness is thus prominent in students learning a new language. According to Carlisle, (2003) the knowledge and ability to decipher words based on their morphological structure helps learners identify the smallest of units of language and their formations. According to Moats, (1994) the awareness of morphological units have helped students to not only learn the language faster but also to use it creatively across all language skills like reading, writing, speaking and listening. Research has shown that students with a greater morphological awareness can comprehend better while reading unfamiliar texts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study consists of research on the morphological awareness (MA) of Omani college students. The main focus of this study is on the vocabulary learning and morphemic structures. The research is done by Farsi (2008) titled morphological awareness and its relationship to vocabulary knowledge and morphological complexity among Omani EFL university students. The test used in this study are morphological awareness test with its sub test i.e. analysis and synthesis and vocabulary level test the MAT is an adaptation from Mc Bride change (2005) which is used to examine the MA of English learning students. Another test used the morpheme identification test, which test the ability of word composition and creative use of new words of phrases. The resultant study however shows that there is little relationship among the vocabulary, growth and morphological awareness as well as between usage of new words and morphological awareness thus this study could not justify any positive correlation between the two major constructs of the morphological awareness.
Another case study titled the morphological awareness and reading comprehension; the qualitative study with adult EFL learners (Badawi, 2019). Yih-Lin Belinda Jiang et al. (2015) analysis morphological awareness of mandarin speaking college students from Taiwan. The primary focus of this study is on the relationship between the reading skills of students of English as foreign language. The instrument use are talk allowed method and personal interviews (Chen & Hinton, 1999). The study demonstrates that there is a relationship between the morphological knowledge and vocabulary enhancement during reading comprehension. However there are less inferences of vocabulary learning based on morphological awareness. Another finding shows that students with greater MA could identify connection between roots and affixes better than those with less knowledge about word structure.

One more study is a statistical analysis done on 214 college students linking their knowledge of morphology with various language skills like listening, reading, writing and speaking. The paper is titled influence of morphological awareness on college students’ literacy skills: path analytic approach, written by Apel (2015). The findings determined that the spelling and word reading can be predicted by the morphological awareness of students. It also suggests that morphologically sound students can consciously manipulate and used morphemes and affixes much better in spellings and in reading comprehensions.

METHODS

The paper is based on primary and secondary data, with a questionnaire and oral discussion method. According to Bai & Perron, (2003) the tests are derived from various literatures referred for this paper with some modification in the size and structure.

Population for the above study is selected according to the need of the analysis. Undergraduate students of college learning English as second language have been selected for the test. The students were selected randomly on volunteer basis hence the level of their English is unknown. The sample collection is from 70 English learning students.

Data collection: above work is based on primary and secondary data. For the primary data collection one test is arranged for English students and for the secondary data different websites and past studies are used. Test design: The English test is designed based on three parts; (1) Overall morphological awareness; (2) Vocabulary development; (3) Word formation-use of inflections and derivations

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall Morphological Awareness

The first part of the study consist of five multiple choice questions. That determines the overall morphemic understanding of the students and their ability to connect unfamiliar words and link it to the given context.

The following table shows the reliability and ratio of overall morphological awareness among English learners as a second language.

Table 1. the reliability and ratio of overall morphological awareness among English learners as a second language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Right Answer</th>
<th>Wrong Answer</th>
<th>Percentage of Right Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of motherhood</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>78.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of morbid</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of recklessness</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>34.28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of likelihood</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>45.71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of visionary</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>27.14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be deduced from the above data that there is a moderate response on morphological stems while a lower predictions of similar words with affixes and derivatives. Most responses
showed that students could identify root words easily while the derivational versions did not make it to the right context and morphological structure. It is noteworthy that the disparity among the answers given by students was more which can be a resultant factor given their diverse background and a different level of exposure to English at an early age. Thus the basic semantics of word formation seems clear than the grammatical inflections based on the morphological structure.

**Vocabulary Development**

The second part of the test aims at analyzing the vocabulary levels of the students based on morphological knowledge. The test consists of ten matches the following questions. This question offers a wide range of words to be match with phrases explaining their meaning. The words are placed in a increasing order of difficulty in the test.

The basic words like birth, car, cart, palm, bench, limit, slow, etc were included in the first part. More compound words like executive, apartment, complement, wholesome, brotherhood were put in the intermediary level while difficult words such as wonder, notion, provincial, drafted, savage, veteran in the final part. From the answers received it was deduced that students could easily identify the words in part one while in the second and third section finding the meaning was relatively difficult.

Further on the students were given a task to use to identify the words into sentences it was overall noticed that most students who succeeded to match the meanings could not use them in relevant sentence formations. However some could do both. This shows that the basic morphological knowledge does not necessarily relate to vocabulary skills and usage. It could be say that morphological awareness aids reading skills and comprehensions albeit may not be effective in speaking and writing as their inflectional forms might not be identified by the participants. The data also can be inaccurate as many participants did not answer all questions. Hence there could not be established much link between morphological awareness and vocabulary size however it could be said that word complexity is counter effective to morphological knowledge. As the task difficulty increases the morphological identification decreases (Bellens et al., 2008). This could be due to the foundational level of learners’ course and there lies a possibility that this hypotheses may change as students advance in their level of language acquisition.

**Word Formation-Use of Inflections and Derivations**

The last part of the test focuses on the inflections of words. According to Chuang et al. (2020) A Word inflection is the most important part of morphological learning. Major part of English learning depends on students’ ability to identify and use prefix, suffix and affixes in order to form new words and modify root word. This can only be acquired if the learner has a sound knowledge of morphemes/root. To test this ability the present test includes ten questions of mixed nature that requires students to identify and fill the blanks using correct form of inflections. The questions include tenses, singulars –plurals, case, and gender and so on.

From the received answered it was observed that most students could produce correct inflections using the sample words. From the received samples more than 80% could successfully answer the blanks.

**CONCLUSIONS**

From all the above points of analysis and findings it can be concluded, that, morphology is definitely an effective means to acquire language; especially English. The basic understanding of morphological roots enables young learners to grasp comprehension and reading skill much better. However, vocabulary building through affixes and annexation along with its relevant usage in sentences might not have an equal inferring effect. Word complexity in terms of grammatical form and composition has lower ratio of linkage with the existing morphological
awareness among students. Moreover, this can be improved upon by expanding the scope of the study and level of participants.

REFERENCES


Farsi, B. A. (2008). morphological awareness (MA) of Omani college students. The main focus of this study is on the vocabulary learning and morphemic structures.


