Development of a Learning Enrichment Material in Morphology: A Focus on Morphemes and Inflections

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Abstract - Morphological awareness comprises primarily knowledge about the pairing of sound and meaning in a language and the word formation rules that guide the possible combination of morphemes. If knowledge of word form and meaning are important to vocabulary acquisition, then it seems logical that those who are more gifted with regard to morphological awareness are better equipped to grow their vocabulary. This study aimed to develop a learning enrichment material in morphology to college students. Specifically, it sought to focus on morphemes and inflections as the 93 Education English major students were already grammatically competent on the use of derivational and inflectional morphemes with reference to the findings of the studies entitled "On Derivational Morphemes: Grammatical Competence of College Students" and On Inflectional Morphemes: Grammatical Competence of College Students" respectively. The descriptive survey method was utilized as the research described and attempted to interpret the overall level of grammatical competence on derivational and inflectional morphemes of Education English major students. Survey and written test questionnaires were used as instruments of this study on which findings revealed that majority of the college students were found to have high grammatical competence on derivational and inflectional morphemes. For this reason, development of a learning enrichment material focused on morphemes and inflections was deemed imperative.

Keywords – *Learning Enrichment Material, Morphemes, Inflections*

INTRODUCTION

In their quest to determine how many different words there are in school English, Nagy and Anderson (1984) which appeared in Rastle (2005) article's How to Learn Vocabulary - A Guide to Learning English estimated that for every word a student learns, there are an average of one to three additional related words that should also be understandable to the child, the exact number depending on how well the child is able to utilize context and morphology to induce meanings.

There are different ways in which a word can be acquired, and it is not simply a matter of whether a word will be learned, but it should be acquired with efficiency. Morphological awareness is not the only

possible route to learning a morphologically-complex word. Although numerous studies have found a link between morphological awareness and understanding newly encountered words, few studies have evaluated learners' ability to produce new words using this knowledge. Production is, of course, an essential part of communication.

A fairly recent article by McCutchen and Logan (2011) sought to examine the link between morphological awareness and students' ability to produce new words in a given context. In this study, students were given a stem word and then a sentence with a blank space. They were tasked with providing a morphological derivation of the stem word to complete the

sentence. The researchers found that the students' abilities to produce correct derivational forms increase consistently with increased morphological awareness, which in turn increases with age and experience with written and spoken language.

In line with other studies discussed, McCutchen and Logan (2011) concluded that, in addition to aiding language production, strategic use of morphological analysis may help children acquire new vocabulary and support comprehension.

Most studies relating morphological awareness to vocabulary acquisition have focused on elementary school-aged learners. This is logical since morphological awareness does improve to at least some extent, apparently spontaneously, with increased age and exposure to language. Still, some research has focused on older students. For example, a study by Bellomo (2009b) explored the usefulness of morphological analysis for college preparatory students. This study also compared performance based on students' native languages with students being native speakers of English as well as several Latin-based (LB) and non-Latin-based (NLB) foreign languages. The author argues that knowing which strategies work best for learning vocabulary at this level is important as morphologically-complex words are common in the university setting.

The author found that, even in this older age group, students' vocabulary scores grew after they received morphological analysis training, suggesting that it is essential that college preparatory reading courses ensure that students have these vital skills. The study also found that morphological analysis was valuable for growing the English vocabulary of all students, regardless of their native language.

This study aimed to develop a learning enrichment material in morphology to college students.

Specifically, it sought to focus on morphemes and inflections as the 93 Education English major students were already grammatically competent on the use of derivational and inflectional morphemes with reference to the findings of the studies entitled *"On Derivational Morphemes: Grammatical Competence of College Students"* and *On Inflectional Morphemes: Grammatical Competence of College Students"* respectively. The said learning enrichment material tackled further topics on free vs. bound morphemes (content words vs. affixes), derivational vs. inflectional morphemes, and lexical and grammatical morphemes.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the descriptive survey method as it described and attempted to interpret the overall grammatical competence on derivational and inflectional morphemes of 93 Education English major students.

The two research instruments used in the aforementioned related studies were the survey and written test questionnaires the results of which prompted the development of a learning enrichment material.

The data were subjected to statistical treatment such as frequency counts, percentage distribution and mean.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On the basis of statistical analyses, this study presented the following salient findings:
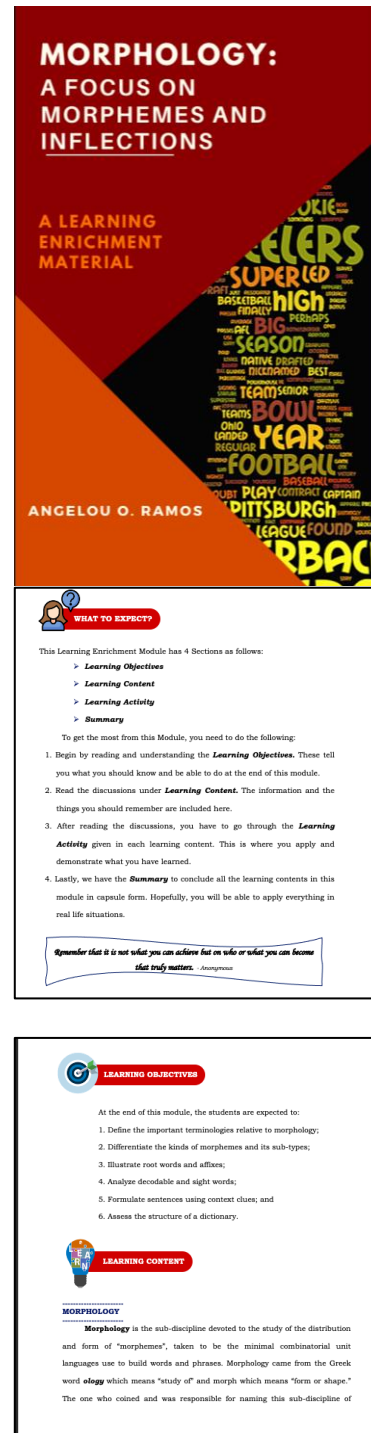
Overall Grammatical Competence of Education English Major Students

Level	Score Range	Derivational Morphemes (Mean=23.32)		Inflectional Morphemes (Mean=23.52)		Overall Competence (Mean=23.42)	Grammatical
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Very High	25 – 30	44	47.3	36	38.7	42	45.2
High	19 – 24	36	38.7	50	53.8	40	43.0
Average	13 – 18	10	10.8	7	7.5	11	11.8
Low	7 – 12	3	3.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Very Low	0 – 6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
TOTAL		93	100%	93	100%	93	100%

Evidently, the overall grammatical competence of the respondents on derivational and inflectional morphemes ranges from high to very high. 42 or 45.2% of the respondents obtained scores ranging from 25-30 interpreted as very high in terms of the level of grammatical competence. 40 or 43.0 % obtained scores ranging from 19-24 interpreted as high while 11 or 11.8 % obtained scores ranging from 13-18 interpreted as average. It is good to note that in terms of the respondents' overall grammatical competence, no one is labelled with low or very low level of grammatical competence.

The finding has significance on the second language teaching and learning, particularly on vocabulary enhancement, for as stated by Nagy and Anderson (1984) which appeared in Rastle (2005), "if knowledge of word form and meaning are important to vocabulary acquisition, then it seems logical that those who are more gifted with regard to morphological awareness are better equipped to grow their vocabulary." Moreover, Stowe (2016) stated that "morphology is a critical element of successful vocabulary development and accurate decoding."

Development of a Learning Enrichment Material

The learning enrichment material has 4 sections as follows:(1) *Learning Objectives* (2) *Learning Content*, (3) *Learning Activity, and* (4) *Summary.* To get the most from this material, you need to do the following: (a) Begin by reading and understanding the *Learning Objectives.*

These tell you what you should know and be able to do at the end of this material. (b) Read the discussions under ***Learning Content.*** The information and the things you should remember are included here. (c) After reading the discussions, you have to go through the ***Learning Activity*** given in each learning content. This is where you apply and demonstrate what you have learned. (d) Lastly, we have the ***Summary*** to conclude all the learning contents in this material in capsule form.

The learning enrichment material tackled further topics on free vs. bound morphemes (content words vs. affixes), derivational vs. inflectional morphemes, and lexical and grammatical morphemes.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the salient findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

Majority of the respondents from the identified related studies were found to have high grammatical competence along derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes. Their grammatical competence must be reinforced since they need this in their academic performance as students and in their future career as English teachers. In light of this, is the development of the learning enrichment material presented herein which was developed to help the respondents reinforce their grammatical competence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the salient findings of this study and conclusions drawn, the following are recommended:

1. For the school administrators to approve for try-out the developed learning enrichment material in morphology which is focused on morphemes and inflections to be employed by the Languages Education faculty as an instructional aid in order to further the grammatical competence of Education English major students of PSU.

2. The conduct of further studies about teaching-learning strategies and styles geared towards the reinforcement of the grammatical competence of Education English major students in order to help them enrich their English proficiency.

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