



EFL LEARNERS' PERCEPTION ABOUT PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES IN ENGLISH MORPHOLOGY

Le Thi Thanh Hienⁱ,

Cao Thi My Nhan

Schools of Foreign Language,
Can Tho University,
Vietnam

Abstract:

Affix knowledge is crucial for enhancing word knowledge in English morphology. Understanding the meaning of affixes not only helps develop knowledge of words but also helps master grammar. This study uses a questionnaire to assess the knowledge of prefixes and affixes and determine students' awareness of affixes. The 21 students participating in the study were all students of the 45th course, majoring in high-quality English. A survey about affix identification was given to participants, to determine their definitions and perceptions of prefixes and suffixes in English morphology. The results show that students can identify a common affix but have difficulty with strange affixes. However, to understand affixes well and be good at morphological awareness, students need to cultivate and understand the theoretical aspects of this knowledge. Another inference of these findings is favorable in the discussion part.

Keywords: affixes, prefixes, suffixes, meaning, word

1. Introduction

Vocabulary knowledge is an essential element of language, which is necessary for acquiring a foreign language. According to the study of language, English learners need 8000-9000 word families to understand well in writing and 6000–7000 words for fluency in discourse (Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010; Nation, 2006). In another study, EFL learners had a vocabulary of about 2000-4000 family words, even though they spent about 1000 hours learning the language during school (Laufer, 2000, 2010). Students must be encouraged to learn independently and acquire language by themselves to achieve such word counts. To infer the meaning of words, typically unfamiliar words, learners first need to specify the part of speech. The words describe the structure of words and their constituent elements, including stems, root words, prefixes, and suffixes. This study only

ⁱ Correspondence: email hienb1909400@student.ctu.edu.vn, nhanb1909414@student.ctu.edu.vn

focuses on prefixes and suffixes. After identifying the units of words, learners need to determine their meanings. Accordingly, word elements can be combined to create new word meanings. For example, "write" is a well-known word that means "to write," so adding a prefix such as "re-"; "over-"; "hand-"; "type-" and suffixes such as "-er"; "-able"; "-up" means what the newly formed words mean. In this example, the newly created words have the following form: "rewrite"; "overwrite"; "handwrite"; "typewrite"; "writer"; "writeable"; "writeup". So how do learners know the meaning of these words? This question can be answered by memorizing the word's meaning but learning and remembering are not enough because there are still countless words in English. Therefore, the components of semantics have been studied to make it easier for native speakers and EFL learners to learn. With separate meanings of affixes, learners only need to combine their meanings. "re-" means again, so in the word, "rewrite" means to write (something) again to alter or improve it. For the prefix "over-", it means more than usual or too much, so the word "overwrite" means writing too much about (some subject). A prefix can be attached to many other root words with their meaning unchanged, so by understanding the meaning of the prefix, learners can infer the meaning of many other words. For example, the prefix "super-" is attached to root words like "superfood"; "superstar"; "supernatural"; "superimpose"; "superhuman".

In morphology, words are associated in another form (for example, conduct, conduct, conduct). It involves determining how well a student learns new words. (Bauer & Nation, 1993; Nation, 2001; Tyler & Nagy, 1989) present considerable instruction for what form a word should take. These writers note the focus on how a word can be constituted of some bound morpheme, with prefixes and suffixes attaching to a base form, all of which contribute to the semantic and grammatical functions of words. Therefore, it is hypothesized that once a base word, or part of a base word, is deduced and/or derived from, is known, other members of a word family can be recognized without any extra effort (Bauer & Nation, 1993, p. 253). Indeed, inflected and derived forms of affixes appear in 34.7 percent of words in written texts (Nation, 2013). Hence, word structure and word-formation principles are favorable for EFL learners when absorbing new words.

Words are a prerequisite for language acquisition. With knowledge of words, English learners can understand and apply them to discourse, writing, and learning. For English learners, receiving and being exposed to countless new words is an obvious thing. However, just memorizing words is not enough, English learners need to understand the structure of a word, which not only helps you understand how words are formed, the grammar of words. At a basic level, words are created with "morphemes". These are the smallest units of meaning: root and affix (prefix and suffix). If English learners do not understand the meaning of the affix, they will not understand the meaning of a strange word containing an advanced prefix or affix. The comprehension of roots and affixes has been demonstrated to help learners in a different field of study (Vance, 1991). This study focuses on studying prefixes and suffixes, as well as giving the meanings of some common suffixes and some advanced suffixes in English. This study assesses the importance of affixes to English learners and determines which words are

prefixes and suffixes. For students majoring in languages, understanding affixes not only helps to expand their vocabulary, but also helps them have better morphological analysis skills.

2. Literature review

2.1 Definition of prefixes

A prefix is a word part that is preceded by the base word. The prefix usually changes the meaning of the base word. For instance, the prefix [un-] attached to the word "unkind" creates a new word with a new meaning. The prefix [un-] means "not or lacking", so it alters the implied meaning of the word kind to not kind. Along with the prefix "un-", the prefix "re-" is also the most used prefix with a very easy-to-remember meaning. The opposite of the prefix "un", the prefix "re" means "again" (rewrite, reconsider).

Prefixes are useful since they do not alter the spelling of the base word. We just added the prefix to the beginning of the basic word. Therefore, the prefix is spelled the same regardless of the base word to which it is appended. For instance, if we learn to syllabicate the prefix "mono-" as in monogamous, we can use "mono-" to be spelled the same in the word monotone, monochrome. But we must notice when double letters occur. When we attach the prefix "un-" to necessary, both the prefix and the word are spelled as they were originally. So, the result is {un}necessary.

There are a few other occasions when two letters appear. {im}migrant, {im}mobile, {im}moral, {il}+logical = {il}logical, {mis}spoke, {mis}spell, {mis}step, {im}+mature = {im}mature, {il}+legal = {il}legal, {ir}reconcilable, {ir}redeemable, {ir}reducible, {ir}regular, {ir}relevant, {ir}reparable, {ir}restistible, {ir}responsible, {dis}satisfy, {dis}service, {dis}similar, {dis}solve. We must also be aware of "prefix that look like prefix". The prefix "re" in "real" isn't a prefix. Some further instances are: "pretty", "press", "uncle", "irony", "antique", "dish", "interest", and "reach" (Vance, 1991).

A. List of common affixes and their meanings

{a-}, {an-}, without, lack of, not; {*anti-*} against, opposite of; {*com-*, *con-*} together, with; {-de} down, off, away from; {-en} put into, cover with; {-extra} beyond, outside, more than; {mono-} one, alone, single; {-up} to the top or north, higher/better; {super-} over, above, greater; {un-} not; {mis-} wrong, badly; {post-} after; {sub-} under, less than; {omni-} everywhere, all.

B. Definition of the suffix

Suffixes are letters or groups of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning or create a new word. Students benefit immensely from studying suffixes as early as possible during their English studies because it considerably improves their reading comprehension at all levels. Prefixes and suffixes are also considered important parts of learning grammar. Learning suffixes is just as important as teaching children root words for enhancing their overall reading comprehension skills, and utilizing suffixes dramatically increases children's vocabulary (Onish, 2010). Knowing the meaning of

suffixes and definitions of suffixes also helps students see and use context and helps people make reasonable estimates about new words' meaning. Many suffixes stem from Greek and Latin roots; ESL students and teachers can benefit from a linguistic strategy for suffix meanings (Callella, 2004).

There are fantastic online suffix resources for making suffix worksheets, suffix exercises, and suffix lists, whether studying or teaching suffixes. Suffixes or word endings are commonly used to indicate the part of speech of a word (e.g., verb, adjective, noun, adverb). This is a straightforward method of determining which part of speech a word belongs to. Moreover, Learners find it incredibly helpful to study suffixes by kind, such as Noun Suffixes, Adjective Suffixes, Adverb Suffixes, and Verb Suffixes, with numerous examples. For instance, one can realize a noun by its suffixes such as {-ator}, {-or}, {-ation}, {-tude}, {-acity}, {-ment}, {-hood}, {-sion}, {-acity} by their respective meanings and examples. Regarding adjective suffixes, they have endings like {-able}, {-less}, {-ian}, {-ive}, {-ing}, {-ish}, {-ous}, {-worthy}. Adverb Suffixes such as {-wise}, {-ably}, and {-ibly} {-wise} are used, and for Verb Endings like suffixes as {-ize}, {-ate}, {-ify}, {-en}, and {-ate}

C. List of the common suffixes in English and their meanings

It should be noted that the following suffixes also represent certain morphology.

{-able, -ible} can, able to be done; {-arium, -orium} place for, container for; {-ify} to make; {-ose, -ous-, -eous, -ious} full of; {-or, -er} one who does; {-est} most; {-er} more; {-ive} something that is; {-ee} individual does something; {-ment} the action or result of; {-ness} a state or quality; {-ship} position held; {-th} state or quality; {-sion} state or being; {-ant} inclined to or tending to; {-ary} of or relating to; {-y} made up of or characterized by.

2.2 Effects of affixes in morphology interference on word learning

A recent study adds empirical support to the theory that learning about bound roots can help with word acquisition. Bowers and Kirby (2010) analyzed how monolingual English students can learn morphological analysis to support target word learning and figure out information about the meanings of unfamiliar words. According to Graves (2004), in order to enhance English, morphological awareness is the most effective word-learning approach. Hatch (1983) truth that affixes are arranged in the human mind in contrast to linguistic features. She claims that while some high-frequency complex words are stored in their entirety in the mind and may be retrieved at any moment, others are generated on the fly via morphological processes like derivation and inflection. Sudana (2006) gives an excellent example of derivational affixation. Sudana claims that incorporating morphological competency into derivational affixation learning helps students learn more words.

Several studies have found that knowing affixes in English can assist students in learning new words by allowing them to guess the meaning of morphemes by connecting unknown words to words they are already familiar with (Nagy et al., 2014; Nation, 2013). Wysocki and Jenkins (1987) found that students who learned language using the morphological technique did better, and participants had a better understanding of new

meanings through the morphological generalization of terms with similar roots. Baumann (2003) studied how successful detailed training on affixes and roots was in helping elementary students who spoke English decipher the meaning of new words.

The results showed that learners who were taught affixes and roots did better than those who were not. Word families were being used to generate learning lists (e.g., Nation, 2004), to investigate the semantic coverage offered by a specific set of word lists (e.g., Laufer & Ravenhorst-Kalovski, 2010), and to assess the number of a learner's vocabulary (e.g., Nation & Beglar, 2007) based on the assumption that the meaning of a word may be easily deduced from the meaning of some other word in the same family. According to corpus-based research, affix knowledge may be beneficial in inferring an unknown word family member.

2.3 The importance of learning words through affixes

The lack of a large vocabulary hinders English learners' capacity to advance and achieve in their ability to grasp what they read and hear in the first place. "The biggest problem preventing English language learners from reading is a lack of proper vocabulary," according to Wallace, a lack of capacity to write at grade level, and a lack of understanding of the role of words in grammar (Wallace, 2008). Knowledge of affixes has long been seen as a crucial component of vocabulary expansion (Laufer, 1991; Nation, 1990, 2001; Thorndike, 1972). Affix knowledge can aid learners in determining the meaning of an unknown word derived from a well-known word within the same word family. According to research by Liu and Nation (1985), 95% of the words around an uncommon word must be known so that students can deduce the meaning of unknown words.

Cummins (2002) discovered that by utilizing common cognates, it is possible to teach approximately 15,000 terms of English vocabulary to Spanish speakers in a short amount of time. Short and Echevarria (2005) found that learners who speak a Latin-based native language can understand English words with similar Latin derivations. Therefore, affixes assist learners in deciphering and analyzing the meaning of new words, even if they are in an unknown or unfamiliar form of language, because they have a similar sound and look.

The knowledge of affixes has been shown to enhance students of all ages and in a range of fields of study (Vance, 1991). Given the potential that affixes have for uncovering a range of new word meanings, learners should focus on the importance of learning affixes. The meaning of affixes makes an important contribution to inferring the meaning of new words. Understanding affixes will help learners understand the structure of words, expand their vocabulary, and firmly grasp grammar. The study was guided by the following research question:

- What do EFL learners perceive about the role of prefixes and suffixes in English?

3. Methodology

This study has only one questionnaire designed in a multiple-choice format. The questions were asked for the purpose of investigating students' knowledge of affixes and their perceptions of affixes. Inspired by the theory of examining the level of words through three aspects of affix, such as affix recognition, knowledge and meaning of affix, and attributes of affix (Sasao, 2016). The questionnaire is sent to students via Google Form, students complete the questionnaire with the requirements specified in each section. The data for multiple-choice questions will be analyzed using pie charts and Google Form statistics; if the data is duplicated or incorrect, it will be re-encoded using Excel and processed again for analysis. For the identification questionnaire with five levels, the data will be recorded in the form of a table with statistics of the number of people and percentages. The data will then be analyzed based on percentages.

3.1 Participants

The study included 21 students who are 3rd year English majors from the high-quality program at Can Tho University. The participants are about 20-21 years old and are all Vietnamese. Vietnamese is the national language, and English is the language they learned the most in high school; their level of English is now above the basic level. All participants received the same high-quality instruction and they all received the same knowledge of classroom English morphology.

3.2 Research instruments

Participants only completed a single test. This test consists of 4 sections. Section 1 contains general information. In this section, participants fill in their Gmail account, gender and course. Section 2 consists of 4 multiple-choice questions related to affixes. In this section, there are 4 multiple-choice questions related to choosing which words are affixes. Section 3 consists of 8 questions about the correct meaning of the prefix and suffix. Both section 2 and section 3 are designed based on the research question of how affixes change root words. The purpose is to assess students' knowledge of affix knowledge and when they understand the meaning of the affix, they will understand its meaning when it is attached to the root word. In this study, we only focus on prefixes and suffixes, so the root word will not be mentioned. In section 4, participants commented on the role of affixes in English learning morphology. This section is based on the second research question "What is the role of affix in English. Students will give their opinions on five levels in this section: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. The questionnaire is sent via Gmail and until enough people complete it, it will be locked. The questionnaire is sent through the mail and until the expected number of respondents is reached, it will be locked.

A. Affix choice

The participants must choose an affiliation from four choices. The three distractors are a group of letters in English that aren't affixes. The final four sentences' meaning is affix.

The participants must choose the meaning of the affix in question sentence. The three distractors are the meanings of other affixes that were chosen at random. The purpose is to assess students' knowledge of affix knowledge and when they understand the meaning of the affix, they will understand its meaning when it is attached to the word root. In this study, we only focus on prefixes and suffixes, so the root word will not be mentioned. Here's a question about which word is a prefix:

1. Choose an affix out of four options?

- Sal-
- Chi-
- La-
- Re-

In this example, sal- occurs in words like salt and sale, chi- occurs in words like chip and chirp, and la- occurs in lace and lad. However, none of the distractors are English affixes. Because all of the distractors are orthographically and phonologically real in English, knowledge of English orthography and phonology is not adequate for eliminating them in this format. The disadvantage of this structure is that it may be difficult to remember some example words that begin or end with specific letters unless the affix forms are explicitly understood.

B. Participants' perception of the role of affixes

This section contains five statements about the influence of prefixes and suffixes on English. For example, affixes make reading more effective. Participants choose an appropriate rating for this statement based on their actual learning experiences, and they also do the same for the following statements. The results of the survey were then analyzed based on the percentages to gauge how participants felt about affixes in English morphology.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaire is sent to students on week 13 of the course via Gmail with commitments to keep their information confidential. This study integrates two data collection tools: choosing affixes and evaluating the role of affixes. The section on choosing the correct suffix and choosing the meaning of the affix is given first so that students can check their knowledge, when they complete the multiple-choice questions, they can estimate their knowledge of the affixes. Thus, in part 3 they will have a more honest assessment of the prefix and suffix.

4. Results

The study has eliminated sentences with grammatical errors and duplicates. Some questions complement the same idea as the research question, so the study only retrieves some typical sentences to serve the research question. To facilitate data analysis, questions about prefixes from the two sections will be grouped into one section, and questions about suffixes will also be grouped into one section.

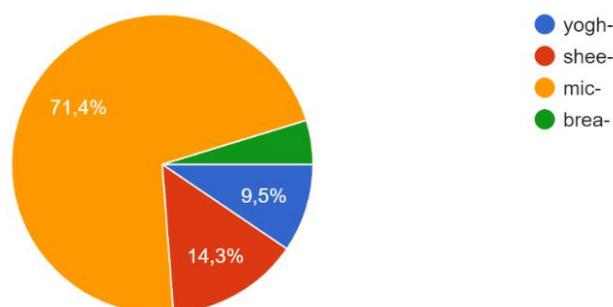
4.1 Participants' perception of the role of affixes

Reliability analysis was performed on items of the questionnaire. I chose percentage analysis because it's easy to analyze and easy to implement. Compared to SPSS, it will take me more time to learn the terms for this tool. The data was analyzed based on percentages, mainly confirming the participants' level of consent. This study also received the same rating as Sukying (2020). The data obtained from the questionnaire was then analyzed to determine the participants' perception of the affix. The results show that most participants agree on the role of affixes for words in English. Regarding the statement about the need for affixes in expanding vocabulary, 57.1% agree and 19% strongly agree. For the statement that my vocabulary has improved through learning affixes, only 42.9% of the participants agreed. It is equal to the neutral percentage. This demonstrates the participants' word-learning methods from a variety of sources. The study's findings imply that understanding affixes aids students in seeing not just the meaning of a word, but also the relationship between the term and its inflected and derived forms. These findings back up previous arguments that knowing English suffixes helps students learn the language. (Carlisle, 2000; Mochizuki & Aizawa, 2000; Hayashi & Murphy, 2011).

4.2 Choose affix

In general, the results of determining what an affix is and the meaning of each affix are different in each sentence. For familiar prefixes, it is easy for students to choose the correct answer, but for unfamiliar prefixes and suffixes, there is a difference in choosing the correct answer. This also proves that students' knowledge of affixes is unequal. As for choosing the correct meaning of the suffix, it seems to cause difficulties for testers when all 4 answers in each sentence are chosen at the same level.

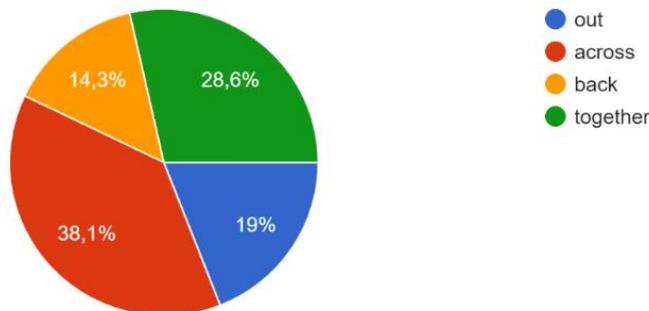
1. Choose prefix
21 câu trả lời



The results of the prefix knowledge test are shown in sentence 1. Prefix "mic-" is the most chosen answer with 71,4% and that's also the correct answer. The remaining 3 words are not affixes, but there are still a few students who make mistakes when choosing them. In general, most of the participants chose the correct answer, proving that they have a good knowledge of prefixes.

3. Choose the meaning of prefix "tra-"

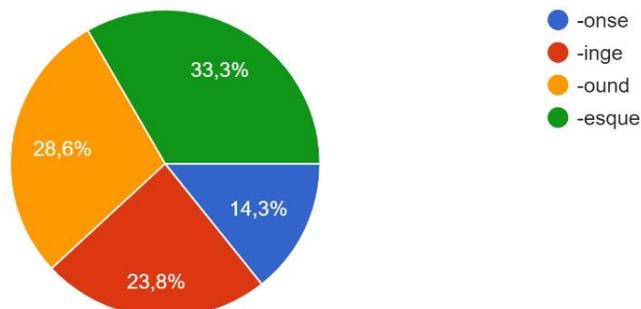
21 câu trả lời



In this sentence, the correct meaning of the prefix "tra-" is across. Based on the results obtained on the pie chart, the correct answer accounts for 38.1%, this answer is equivalent to the other answers. It seems that the participants had difficulty figuring out the correct meaning of the prefix "tra-" when all other answers were selected.

4. Choose suffix

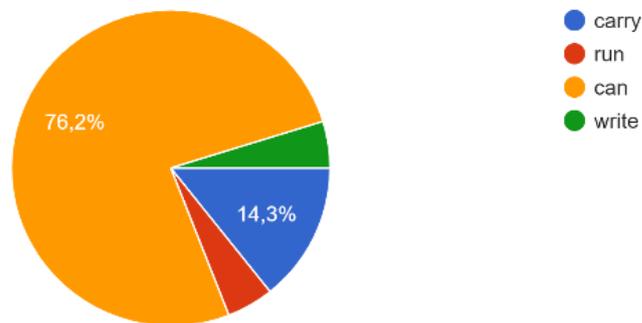
21 câu trả lời



In the affix selection, it seemed a bit difficult for the participants, all four answers were selected in equal proportions. The suffix "-esque" was chosen the most with 33.3% and that is also the correct answer. The remaining words are not suffixes, "-ound" is the second most chosen word with 28.6%. In general, participants still have difficulty identifying suffixes.

5. Choose the meaning of suffix "-able"

21 câu trả lời



In this question, participants choose the correct meaning of the suffix "able". This is also the question with the most correct answers. In this section, the correct meaning of the suffix "-able" is "can". Based on the results obtained on the pie chart, the correct answer accounted for 76.2%, and the rate of incorrect choices accounted for only 23.8%.

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Knowledge of affix is necessary to help expand the knowledge of words	9,5%	-	14,3%	57,1%	19%
Understanding affixes is a useful approach to learning vocabulary	4,8%	4,8%	19%	47,6%	23,8%
Knowledge of affixes helps with writing skills	4,8%	4,8%	19%	47,6%	23,8%
Knowledge of affixes in English helps improve English grammar	4,8%	4,8%	28,6%	52,4%	9,5%
My vocabulary has improved through learning affixes	4,8%	9,5%	42,9%	42,9%	-

5. Discussion

The first research question of this study concerns the influence of prefixes and suffixes on word roots. Practicing affixation strategies rather than using a word translation approach to memorize new words. Understanding the meaning of affixes is an effective way to infer the meaning of words. Based on the percentage of correct answers for the 4 questions analyzed on the 4 pie charts in the result section, I have concluded that it is easier to determine the affix and its meaning when these are familiar words, and it becomes more difficult to identify prefixes and suffixes at a more advanced level. In addition, with the correct percentage of participants, they have a certain knowledge of affixes in English morphology. Furthermore, the findings indicate that learners are more interested in learning word bases.

The reason, I put up 12 questions about choosing affixes and choosing the right meaning to support this research question is because each prefix has its own meaning, so

when it is attached to the original words, it will change the meaning of the word and create a new meaning; suffixes change the meaning of bases or roots, which hold the main meaning of the word. Numerous words have different parts of speech depending on the suffix. Many researchers have stated that affixing has advantages in reading and writing. Students' morphological understanding predicted reading comprehension better than their vocabulary level (Kieffer and Lesaux (2007)).

5.1 The role of prefixes and suffixes in English morphology

The second and final research question of this study is about the role of prefixes and suffixes in English morphology. This study refers to the students' comments about the importance of affixes in different aspects of English so that the research has a basis and makes a more convincing statement. Based on the analysis results of the data table in the results section, students have positive opinions about the role of affixes. Most participants recognized the significance of affixes in expanding their vocabulary. Affixes in English help students improve their word knowledge as well as their reading, writing, and grammar skills. With the above statements, it supports the statements about the role of prefixes and suffixes. This discovery is in line with Bauer and Nation's (1993) goal of discovering word families, which are required for a systematic vocabulary teaching and learning strategy. These findings back up previous arguments that knowing English suffixes helps you learn the language. (Mochizuki & Aizawa, 2000; Carlisle, 2000; Hayashi & Murphy, 2011).

Other research that produces a questionnaire about participants' perceptions of affix instruction might also prove useful. Sukying (2020) claims that when students comprehend that words can be broken down into smaller morphemes and that they are made up of inflected and derived forms, parsing and reconstructing words become easier.

6. Conclusion

Prefixes and suffixes are commonly known as affixation. Prefixes and suffixes are generally known as affixation. Understanding affixes aids students in seeing not only the meaning of a word, but also the relationship between it and its inflected and derived forms. Affixation builds new words by qualifying or transforming meaningful root words. Prefixes are letters added to the beginning of a word to create a new term with a variety of meanings. A prefix can be added to many different words and the meaning of that prefix remains the same.

However, the optimum way to learn vocabulary is still unclear, partially because it is dependent on a wide range of factors (Groot, 2006). The study also partly illustrates the growth in students' awareness of prefixes and suffixes. The resemblance of the target language to the learner's language determines how easy or difficult it is to learn another language. Shin and Milroy (2000) claimed that the lack of morphemes in the learner's L1 has a significant impact on morpheme acquisition in English. According to Stockwell and Donka (2001), more than 80% of the total vocabulary of English is made up of loanwords

and most of its words can be used with affixes. Therefore, it is more effective to expand your vocabulary and understand the meaning of words from affixes than to just memorize words. Thus, English learners should consider using affixes as a method to improve their knowledge of words, it is useful in both morphological subjects and as a basic premise to go into depth in the field of language. This. However, this study is still limited. First, the affix testing method was not validated. The questionnaire asked the participants to choose an affix and the meaning of that affix from four choices, but I did not investigate how well this method accurately measured a learner's acquisition of prefixes and suffixes. In addition, the number of participants in this study was very small, and they were not as diverse by grade as in the first and second years. In more specialized studies, such researchers analyze data from a variety of learners with varying levels of expertise.

7. Limitations

This study still has some limitations. This study may have a test to check knowledge for two groups: one group is specifically guided about affixes, and the other group is not, or this study may limit the time to do the test or not use the internet. Next, the number of participants in this study was small, which did not provide enough data and a basis for a general assessment. In addition, they do not have much-specialized knowledge in this area of linguistics, so the study cannot convey the importance of affixes and interpretations.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

About the Authors

Miss Le Thi Thanh Hien and Miss Cao Thi My Nhan have been the students of School of Foreign Languages of Can Tho University (CTU) since September 2019. They are currently in their final-year students and will graduate from Can Tho University in September 2023. They can be easily contacted respectively via email: hienb1909400@student.ctu.edu.vn and nhanb1909414@student.ctu.edu.vn

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