

Improving Vocabulary through Word Formation at Secondary Level: A Survey

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Abstract: English is being used all over the world as an international language. It has become a Lingua Franca and a language of greater opportunities. It also enjoys a supreme status in society. Its sound knowledge is a successful passport for any job. For learning any language, both the oral and written skills are of equal importance. In fact, learning a second language is never easy. Learners have to wrestle with new vocabulary, rules of grammar, pronunciation and more. In learning a second language, vocabulary is the most paramount part. It is the soul and essence of a language. It is also first and leading stair in a language acquisition. Its knowledge plays an important role in almost all areas of language. So, the whole process of learning a language depends on learning its vocabulary. The current study evaluated the ways to improve vocabulary through word formation at secondary level. It was a survey type of research based on quantitative research approach. Two hundred students and fifty teachers from Bahawalpur region participated in this study. The data was assembled through a close-ended questionnaire. The collected data was analyzed in SPSS. The findings of the study revealed a significant improvement in vocabulary. It is recommended that quizzes, exercises and tests for affixes should be used to enhance the vocabulary among students. The recommendations and findings of this study should be taken into careful consideration and steps should be taken to implement those in our classrooms. If implemented intentionally, it is expected that the state of the teaching and learning of vocabulary skills at secondary level will be improved remarkably.

Key Words: Improving, Word formation, Vocabulary, Survey, Soul.

Introduction

Pakistan is a developing country. Its literacy rate is not praiseworthy and is at the low level in the ranking list of literate countries. The situation is even worse in rural areas (Bhatti, 2016). The students even after twelve years of educations are unable to get command over English Language (Kannan, 2009; Bhatti, 2016). Students just study to pass their exams and most of them prepare specific areas of syllabus (Warsi, 2004) which directly affects their learning. Language is a weapon for man. It has to be taught and used in social groups. It is the only way to speak with each other and it is the way by which we can send our messages to others. It is not only used for routine dialogue but also used in education, research and science in spoken as well as in written form. Without it, man is like a dumb animal. Proficiency over target knowledge of vocabulary can make our students powerful speakers, handsome listeners, good readers and writers. For learning any language, both the oral and written skills are of equal importance. For this purpose, there is a dire need of interaction among the learner, educator and the study material.

In fact, English is being used all over the world as an international language and has become a Lingua Franca and a language of greater opportunities. It also enjoys a supreme status in society. Its sound knowledge is a successful passport for any job. Basically, learning a second language is never easy. Learning of vocabulary is the very basic point to expertise it in the target language. Vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary retention and vocabulary transfer are some confused processes in learning vocabulary. No doubt, the role of vocabulary is

very vital in order to language teaching and learning. Mastery in vocabulary will enable the students to enhance other skills well.

Developing vocabulary is a confused series of actions to achieve the results. It takes a long time to master English vocabulary. It makes the learning process more meaningful. Lack of vocabulary seems one of the major causes of failure of our students. It is the major hindrance in learning process especially English. Academic English is essential for the success of ESL learners in school settings. Knowledge of morphemes and affixes (prefixes, suffixes) are one part of academic English that may increase student's achievement. It has been observed that in most of our public and private schools, the teachers teach the students only by the so-called traditional ways of teaching English vocabulary. Learners have to wrestle with new vocabulary, rules of grammar, pronunciation and more. Word formation is an appropriate strategy for the ESL learners to develop their vocabulary widely and polish their skill.

In learning a second language, vocabulary is the most paramount part. It is the soul and essence of a language. It is also first and leading stair in language acquisition. Its knowledge plays an important role in almost all areas of language. So, the whole process of learning a language depends on learning its vocabulary. The study of prefixes, roots and suffixes is the most utilized word parts that make fifty percent of the English language (Pitman, 2003). English vocabulary is marvelous and becomes the part and parcel of technology and social interaction. Gradual practice of prefixes, roots and suffixes can improve vocabulary of the students (Pitman, 2003). The cognitive, social, and psychological factors involve in learning and retaining of vocabulary. The social indicators of students learning process are parents, peers and teachers who help in refining the learning process of the learners through different literary events.

The current study is about the importance of the role that the processes of word-formation, especially affixes, play in the acquisition of English as a second language in the classroom at secondary level. It intends to investigate the problems, difficulties, needs and interests of the students of elementary level in the area of affixes, and their importance in acquiring vocabulary.

Statement of the Problem

The researcher has observed that the ESL learners of Bahawalpur city face problems and difficulties in the area of affixes involved in building and forming words in learning English. Affixes are problematic for students and one of their major difficulties is the recognition and the production of them. The students encounter difficulty in perceiving and recognizing them in their learning of English. They cannot attain mastery and command of them in daily life interaction, communication, the academic subjects and requirements. So imparting English vocabulary to the ESL learners through affixes is a new idea. Most of the English teachers are unaware of this innovative technique. That's why it seems them difficult to switch over to this new technique of teaching. The students also remain dull in learning vocabulary in traditional classrooms. In our government schools, the majority of the students cannot comprehend the words they have been taught. With this scenario, the researchers decided to conduct a research on *"Improving Vocabulary through Word Formation at Secondary Level: A Survey"*. This study will draw the attention of the teachers to use affixes to make their teaching effective, easy and interesting. It will also investigate how the use of word formation helps the learners to overcome their short comings of vocabulary skills in the target language.

Objectives of the Study

This particular study is an attempt to search for the most appropriate, fruitful and inspirational way to teach vocabulary in secondary schools. So the objectives of the current study were:

1. To find out the impact of using word formation for enriching vocabulary
2. To find out the perceptions of the teachers regarding the use of word formation.

Research Questions

To achieve the required objectives, following research questions were formulated:

- Q1: What is the impact of word formation upon vocabulary enrichment of secondary level learners?
- Q2: What are the perceptions of teachers about the use of word formation in the classrooms?
- Q3: How can word formation be important in acquiring English vocabulary at secondary level?

Significance of the Study

Words are building blocks of language. So affixes are helpful for improving vocabulary. The study is an attempt to provide a detailed analysis and description of the affixes in order to emphasize the important role they play in the acquisition of vocabulary. The positive results of this research will support the English teachers to use affixes for developing vocabulary of their students and even they can change their methods to make the students motivated and relaxed in teaching learning process. It will enable the teachers of English of secondary level to be in a better position to diagnose the causes and to offer appropriate treatment. Thus, the teachers, scholars, syllabus designers and educationists can use the present study for various pedagogical purposes including assisting ESL learners to attain better mastery and command of vocabulary.

Literature Review

Importance of English Language

According to Wilkins (1874), a nation is recognized by language. There are many languages used all over the world. In which the most commonly and internationally spoken language is English. Most of the books are written in English while some are translated into English for better comprehension. It is considered to be world language. It is an international currency. Half of the world scientific literature is written in English. The Cairo Egyptian Gazette said. "English is not the property of capitalist Americans, but of the entire world". i.e British, American, Caribbean, West African, East African, Indian, South-east, Asian etc are the world varieties of English.

We cannot make our influence without command on English language (Mathews, 1989).

English is an international language. It is used in the most parts of the world and also such locality, where the land is wide, like India where various cultures are running together and each culture differs from the other and so is their language, people coming from abroad will not be able to understand the various language. So those who are known to English will deal the situation better. To be able to use English in communication, young learners need to acquire necessary vocabulary items and structures. While doing so, at the beginning stages of language learning, new vocabulary should be presented orally with related pictures, drawing, video etc.

Vocabulary teaching and learning is a constant challenge for teachers as well as students because historically there has been minimal focus on vocabulary instruction in the ESL classroom. Due to this, an increased emphasis on vocabulary development is crucial for the English language learner in the process of language learning. We cannot convey a single idea without vocabulary. The importance of vocabulary can be shown with the help of this quote, as the British linguist David .A. Wilkins (1972) puts it "Without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary nothing can be conveyed".

According to Moeen (1992), the child uses noise and loudness with a rudimentary system of information before he learns specific words, uses utterances for a period and develops intonation akin to the intonation of his parents. Development of his intonation may go for ahead of other elements and units of the language. The components of language are as under:

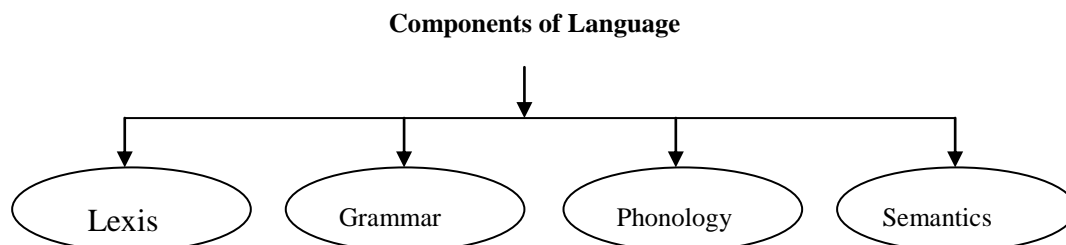


Figure 1. Components of language

(a) Lexis: Lexis carries great significance in a language. It is just like the flesh of a living organism, and it gives richness and extensiveness to a language.

(b) Grammar: According to Michael (2005), Grammar gives structure and form to a language. It is just like a network of bones within the body of an organism. Combining together Lexis and Grammar, they give birth to a language and almost all the languages have the following systems:

- a. Grammatical system b. Phonological system c. Lexical system

(c) Phonology: It is the system of sounds in a language. Any message conveyed by a language has to be first converted into words put together according to the grammatical rules and these words are then conveyed by sounds. It is a broader study of the major speech sounds and their organization in a particular language. Moreover, it deals with how English organizes elements of speech into an integrated system. Accuracy, fluency, and intonation are the main purposes of phonology. Intonation is concerned with the pitch of the voice, the musical feature of the voice (Michael, 2005).

(d) Semantics: Semantics is the study of meanings in a language. And a language in itself is very sensitive to the situation. So it is rather difficult to reach at the exact meanings of words in a sentence. The aim of semantics is to explain and clarify the nature of meaning (Shams, 2003).

The Nature of Vocabulary

English language has become a key to interaction among global community. Today it is spoken and understood almost everywhere in the world. All the administrative issues regarding business, political and academic are discussed in English. In Pakistan, English is being used and understood as second language. It is an essential part from KG to university level. Unfortunately in Pakistan, English is considered a difficult language due to different structure of vocabulary and pronunciation from local languages. According to Schmitt (2000) the knowledge of words related to its meaning and clarifications is called vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is the fundamental element in mastering a second language. Vocabulary learning is a confused process. They are vocabulary acquisition, vocabulary retention, and vocabulary transfer (Schneider et al. 2002). Lado (1955) reported that three aspects (semantics, syntax, and arrangement of words) are focused during vocabulary teaching.

Different languages have different sentence structures, meanings and arrangement of words which lead to multiple vocabulary learning issues. There are social, psychological and neurological factors involved in learning and retaining of vocabulary. A child is socialized under the influence of parents, school and peers. They play vital role in learner's literary events. Shen (2003) states that interaction between adults and a child is the primary source of child's education. According to Stoller and Grabe (1993), the development of vocabulary is necessary for both native and nonnative learners. Kaivanpanah and Zandi (2009) explore that first and second language cannot be comprehended without vocabulary knowledge. Hulatiijn (2005) believed, "If one does not know the meaning of the words occurring in a text, understanding is severely hampered" (p.54). Quin (1996) analyzed, "The hardest way to learn new words is a try to memorize a list of unrelated words and their meanings". According to Ellis (1995), long term retention is one of the greatest problems in learning new vocabulary.

The issue of vocabulary learning strategies was studied by different experts. According to Paivo (1986), the basic unit of success in the second language classroom is vocabulary. It has an important role in the success of second language learners. Vocabulary is one of the major complaints of learners. They are unable to retain the vocabulary items for a long period. Current studies are not sufficient to solve this issue. The learners forget vocabulary words. Students learn a large number of words but they cannot retain those words in their long term memories. Consequently, this study is expected to help learners in learning and retaining vocabulary through affixes.

In a language, words are building blocks. Learners begin to develop knowledge of second language by learning the words. In a language, words do not exist as isolated items. They are interwoven in a system in order to achieve understanding for producing ideas. Richard (1976) stated that word association; register and semantic structure are included in lexical items. Vocabulary is essential for successful second language use because without an extensive vocabulary, we will be unable to use the structure and function we may have learnt for comprehensible communicative. It can be said that one key the success in communicative, which is the power of words.

Vocabulary means the appropriate diction or the most important thing in a language especially in speaking; furthermore, knowing many vocabularies we will be easier to express our ideas, feeling and thoughts both in oral or written form. In spoken language, the vocabulary tends to be familiar and everyday (Ur, 2003:87). It means that in spoken language or speaking, the vocabulary used must be very familiar and it is used in everyday conversation in order to understand the spoken discourse. Vocabulary is a basic building block of language learning. Students need to know words, their meanings, how they are spelt and how they are pronounced. Thus,

when teaching vocabulary, the teachers have to make sure that they explain the meaning as well as the spelling and pronunciation. Vocabulary is the knowledge of meanings of words. What complicates this definition is the fact that words come in at least two forms: oral and written. Oral vocabulary is the set of words for which we know the meanings when we speak or read orally. Written vocabulary consists of those words for which the meaning is known when we write or read silently. These are important distinctions because the set of words that beginning readers know are mainly oral representations. As they learn to read, written vocabulary comes to play an increasingly larger role in literacy than does the oral vocabulary (Hiebert and Kamil, 2005:3). Moreover, Vocabulary is a set of lexemes including single words, compound words and idioms (Richards & Schmidt, 2002:580).

Word Formation

In order for Pakistani students to communicate in English language, vocabulary learning has a highly paramount role. One of the essential strategies for learning vocabularies is Word Building Strategy or so called Word Formation Strategy. Armbruster et al. (2001) defined word formation strategy as "Teaching students to use word parts to figure out the meanings of words in text." This strategy can be beneficial to the students' vocabulary development. "Knowing some common prefixes and suffixes (affixes), base words, and root words can help students learn the meanings of many new words." The sense of curiosity of students toward the words parts and segments is very important. However, how to activate this sense of curiosity is more challenging. The study investigated whether the learning vocabulary through word formation strategy could affect on vocabulary learning of Pakistani students or not.

Despite their importance to the foreign learners, processes of word formation are often neglected in ESL classrooms and teaching materials. This is a result of negligence of vocabulary as a teaching item in the curriculum and priority given to the rules of sentence construction or language form and structure. Linguistics theories, in general, have not focused on the aspect of the processes of word-formation and their importance in acquiring English. Moreover, very little research has been done on the pedagogic state of the processes of word-formation. However, a growing number of scholars have realized the importance of the processes of word-formation in the acquisition of English language. The educationists, in general, have come to the conclusion that vocabulary is very important in effective social interaction and communication and the academic subjects and requirements.

Mastery of vocabulary is essential for good communication and when it is L2, the requirement of the command of language is most needed. Hence teaching of vocabulary is important. Vocabulary learning begins from the very first day of one's learning and it continues throughout one's life career. We do vocabulary learning whenever we come in contact with a new language. We start using these new words as soon as we get them. We are considered good users of language when we are capable of using words effectively and productively. Consequently, no one can deny that the processes of word-formation are very important in learning and teaching process. They are important in acquiring L2. Word-formation is becoming a matter of great interest for linguists because of the light it throws on other aspects of language. The significance of the study of word-formation is increasing day by day. There are many ways (processes) of word formations. The most important among them are: affixes (prefixes and suffixes), compounds, blends, reduplications, conversions, clippings, acronyms and back-formation.

The present study focused on the area of Affixes for teaching and learning of vocabulary. A very little work is available today which investigates the importance of affixes in TEFL. Sinclair et al (1986) in the introduction, comment on the importance of vocabulary and affixes in learning English as follows: Once you have built up a basic vocabulary of English, you can begin to say what you want to. As you add more and more words to your vocabulary, you are able to express a greater range of ideas or talk about a wider range of topics, and one of the ways of increasing your vocabulary is by describing the patterns involved in building words, i.e. affixes.

There are many important reasons for teaching English affixes and vocabulary:

1. English is an international language and it is used as the medium of communication almost throughout the whole world. It is the language of science, technology, internet and computer. So, the students have to be exposed to English vocabulary and affixes in order to be able to use words effectively and productively to attain mastery and command of the language for interaction, communication and academic requirements.
2. Affixes are problematic for students in recognizing and producing. So, students have to be trained to practice and drill to recognize, perceive, produce and use affixes properly and appropriately to improve their vocabulary.

3. The competence and proficiency of the students of the tertiary level are less than required. They have poor background and knowledge of the language. They have inadequate and insufficient acquisition of English vocabulary and affixes. So, students' vocabulary and acquisition of affixes have to be reinforced in learning L2 to have competence, proficiency and knowledge of the language.

4. The secondary level learners in Bahawalpur now have perceived the importance and necessity of English language. It is studied by a large number of students in private schools, institutes and colleges there. They want to improve their English language competence, proficiency and knowledge in order to meet the massive need in the present life. They are looking forward to getting jobs as English teachers in public and private institutions. They want jobs in the companies and in different fields such as medicine faculties, technology faculties, science faculties and so on which use English as the medium of instruction.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The researchers are going to apply quantitative approach. For that the researchers gauged the level of students in the form of close-ended questionnaires. The quantitative approach helped the researchers to assess the success of different activity tools and teaching techniques to the class. For this, questionnaires were distributed among the teachers and students of Govt. S.D. High School, Bahawalpur and Workers Welfare School (Girls) Bahawalpur.

Population of the Study

Population of the study was the teachers and the students of 9th class in the academic year 2018-19 at Govt. S.D. High School, Bahawalpur and Workers Welfare School (Girls), Bahawalpur.

Sample of the Study

For this study, 50 teachers and 200 students of 9th class in the academic year 2018-19 at Govt. S.D. High School, Bahawalpur and Workers Welfare School (Girls), Bahawalpur participated.

Research Tools

A self-developed Questionnaire was used by the researchers to collect the data from the respondents.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed with the help of using SPSS version 23. The mean distribution was calculated by using frequency table and standard deviation. The following table showed the different sources that were used by the participants for improving vocabulary skills through word formation.

Table 1. Enhancement of motivation in learning vocabulary is due to use of word formation.

	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Neutral	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
Agree	72	36.0	36.0	40.0
Strongly Agree	120	60.0	60.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 1 represents answers related to the question; Enhancement of motivation in learning vocabulary is due to use of word formation. The above data represents frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percentage of the values thus giving clear picture of data distribution. From 200 responses, no one was on the option of

strongly disagree and disagree whether only 4% neutral, 36% agree and 60% strongly agree. Thus illustrating the complete data range from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the majority being agree at 36% and strongly agree at 60% which is the highest range from other all scales.

Table 2. Vocabulary has absolutely affected my English reading proficiency.

	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	4.0
Neutral	8	4.0	4.0	8.0
Agree	88	44.0	44.0	52.0
Strongly Agree	100	50.0	50.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 defines answer related to the question; vocabulary has absolutely affected my English reading proficiency. Here in the table data illustrates frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percentage which is providing vivid picture of data distribution. From the 200 responses, only 2% disagree, 4% neutral, 44% agree, 50% strongly agree and no one strongly disagree. Thus illustrating the complete data range from being strongly disagree to strongly agree with the majority being agreed at 44% and strongly agree at 50%. The highest range favored the objectives of study.

Table 3. Learners can improve their vocabulary by using word formation technique.

	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Neutral	12	6.0	6.0	6.0
Agree	80	40.0	40.0	46.0
Strongly Agree	108	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 3 illustrates responses of the respondents regarding the question. It not only presents frequency but also contains percent, valid percent and cumulative percentage of the values thus providing vivid picture of data distribution. Of the 200 responses, only 6% neutral, 40% agree, 54% strongly agree and no one response was found about strongly disagrees, disagree. The values in the given table covering the data range from strongly disagree to strongly agree with the majority being agreed at 40% and strongly agree at 54%.

Table 4. Student-centered environment is highly recommended to learn English vocabulary.

	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid				
Strongly Disagree	8	4.0	4.0	4.0
Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	6.0
Neutral	16	8.0	8.0	14.0
Agree	68	34.0	34.0	48.0
Strongly Agree	104	52.0	52.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Table 4 exemplifies the responses of the respondents regarding the question; Student-centered environment is highly recommended to learn English vocabulary. It characterizes the frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percentage respectively of the values thus providing vivid picture of data distribution. From 200 responses, 4% strongly disagree, 2% disagree, 4% neutral, 34% agree and 52% strongly agree. The values given in the above table is covering the data range from strongly agree to strongly disagree with the majority being agree at 34% and strongly agree at 52%.

Table 5 illustrates the responses of respondents regarding question. It is providing the vivid picture of data distribution by showing frequency, percent, valid percent and cumulative percentage respectively of the values. From 200 responses, 0% strongly disagrees, only 2% disagree, 0% neutral, 44% agree and 54% strongly agree. The table is covering the data range of the values from strongly disagrees to strongly agree with the majority of being agreed at 44% and strongly agrees 54%.

Table 5. Word formation can help to understand affixes in English content.

	Frequency	Percent Valid	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Strongly Disagree				
Disagree	4	2.0	2.0	2.0
Agree	88	44.0	44.0	46.0
Strongly Agree	108	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

Conclusions

After completing the analysis of data, the researchers found the following information:

- Affixes played a very prominent and important role in teaching vocabulary to ESL learners.
- Teachers were not equipped with sufficient language proficiency and were unable to use Word formation technique.
- Students were eager to learn English words but they were hindered because of fluency, accuracy and shyness.
- Teachers were not professionally trained to teach language skills.
- Without the use of affixes in teaching vocabulary of English language, children's creativity and curiosity is curbed and rote learning is encouraged.
- Their concept of teaching is teacher centered not pupil centered.
- The teaching learning atmosphere was discouraging instead of encouraging.
- Students needed repetition of the words at various points to become more accurate.

The researchers conclude that word formation is effective in reinforcing vocabulary acquisition and picture reading. So it is evident that:

- Word formation played an important role to enable the students to grasp vocabulary.
- It created interest in the students and they were eager to learn new words.
- It helped in maintaining the interest and active participation of students.
- It improved students' fluency, accuracy and vocabulary as well.
- The students remained motivated during the activities inside the classroom.
- Majority of the secondary level teachers do not use affixes during their lessons.
- The use of learning resources in the teaching of vocabulary is a vital component in enhancing capability and understanding in a lesson.
- As revealed by the data, the lessons in which affixes were provided, the learners showed not only interest but also increased performance in learning vocabulary.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the investigation and findings of this study, the researchers make following suggestions and recommendations for better retention of vocabulary:

- The teachers should have grasp over their subject. They should be qualified & well-trained. They should be able to organize different activities inside the classroom.
- They should be able to write, design and choose such activities which are more useful and give ample practice to the students to cope with the daily life vocabulary.
- Teaching about prefixes and suffixes should be included for all students with special emphasis on the mostly commonly occurring to assure that all students learn about this important piece of academic English.
- Teachers should also be encouraged to enhance their teaching skills as well.
- The students should be allowed to practice in pairs to incorporate new words and phrases with interactive conversation.
- Teachers can develop students' vocabulary through affixes by giving them an exposure for the new phrases and vocabulary they might encounter.
- Secondary level teachers should make their lessons child-centered rather than teacher centered. This will result in more interaction between the children to reinforce acquisition of vocabulary skills.
- The lessons should be based on functional language.

- There must be a systematic progression in lessons e. g. from easy to difficult..

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