

Morpheme Effect on Guessing from the Context

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ABSTRACT

Guessing the meaning of an unknown word in a reading text is one way of learning vocabulary. Learners use varied kinds of guessing strategies while reading a text. Many researchers have stated that analyzing the word structure when inferring an unknown word in a certain context is an effective strategy. Learners' use of strategies may vary depending on learner characteristics. For example, more proficient learners are more successful guessers and use a wider variety of guessing strategies than those who are less proficient. Another factor affecting the ability to guess the meaning of an unknown word might be the learner's L1. For instance, Spanish speaking learners of English acquire vocabulary faster and more successfully than Arabic and Finnish speakers, because English and Spanish are related languages, sharing many lexical features. However, Turkish and English are unrelated languages with few aspects in common. For example, Turkish does not have any prefixes while English words are combinations of morphemes: prefixes, suffixes, and stems.

In this paper, I will present a finished study of Turkish learners' attention to the prefixes and suffixes while guessing the meaning of an unknown word in a reading text. The purpose of the study is to determine whether Turkish speakers of English use prefixes when inferring the meaning of an unknown word. In addition, this study will investigate whether they use suffixes more efficiently and successfully than prefixes, due to fact that Turkish does not have any prefixes but has a great many suffixes. In this study, introspective methods will be used in order to give insight as to what Turkish learners of English think and do when they come across an unknown word and how they deduce the meaning of the unknown words. The correctly guessed words from the text will be analyzed in order to understand which English morpheme type, if any, is used more successfully to infer the meaning of the unknown word. The results of this study will be of benefit to language teachers in helping them to understand that whether there is an L1 effect in the use of different word structures in L2 in terms of different word structures in the process of guessing the meaning of an unknown word in a certain reading text.