# MORPHOLOGICAL AWARENESS OF STUDENTS MAJORING IN ENGLISH STUDIES TOWARDS VOCABULARY LEARNING

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**Abstract:**

For those learning a second language, vocabulary plays a vital role in mastering the new one, and possessing a colossal vocabulary is extremely necessary. The paper aims to look into and assess students' awareness of morphology and the effectiveness of this approach through vocabulary learning. The subjects in this study were juniors majoring in English at a university in the south of Vietnam. The test, questionnaire, and interview were the three instruments used in this study to triangulate the results. A total of 49 students majoring in English Studies took the test, 40 students completed the questionnaire, and four students participated in an interview to evaluate their proficiency and morphological knowledge. The results of the study showed that students' awareness levels were average, and they were knowledgeable enough to employ this strategy for acquiring vocabulary. Additionally, it also enables students to comprehend morphology's benefits and drawbacks during their learning vocabulary process.

**Keywords**: morphological awareness, vocabulary learning, English-majored students

## 1. Introduction

Learning a language is a complex, time-intensive process that requires dedication and perseverance. Learners will face a multitude of challenges, one of which is mastering the language's vocabulary. Vocabulary is the initial essential element and fundamental to all language use. As Wilkins (1972) stated, *"without grammar, very little can be conveyed; without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed"*. According to Schmitt et al. (2017), people utilise language to communicate and express meaning, and vocabulary primarily conveys this meaning. Moreover, vocabulary knowledge is significantly linked as an

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essential factor for successful verbal, reading, listening comprehension, writing performances and general language ability of English as a foreign language (EFL) (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004; Shanahan, 2006; Stæhr, 2009; Karakoç & Köşe, 2017). Thus, vocabulary size is one of the essential aspects of the English learning process since it plays a critical role in developing learners' skills.

Nevertheless, acquiring it can be very challenging. As Yunus et al. (2016) mentioned acquiring vocabulary and expanding vocabulary size would become obstacles for students due to diverse problems such as learning disability, lack of self-confidence, lack of exposure to English, and a lack of comprehension of effective vocabulary strategies. Vocabulary learning has become a significant challenge for students that traditional learning methods cannot solve. Therefore, the proper vocabulary learning strategies contribute a critical role in acquiring vocabulary. Considerable research has been conducted in this area to assist learners in developing vocabulary acquisition in various ways. Morphological awareness, for example, is essential for the proficient use of a language, and teaching about morphology can facilitate the acquisition of new words (Sukying, 2020).

To be more specific, morphological information provides critical cues for word pronunciation and information about semantic relations (Chomsky & Halle, 1968). According to previous studies, a semantic relation exists between different morphological forms of a word, and the meanings of morphologically complicated words can be derived from the meanings of their component morphemes (Kieffer, 2009; Sparks & Deacon, 2015). Therefore, students' awareness of morphology and word structure is beneficial in vocabulary learning since it allows them to identify unknown words and figure out what they mean. As Stoller and Grabe (1995) observed, students might recognise the meanings of numerous words by memorising just a few stems, prefixes, and suffixes. These can give students clues regarding the meanings of dozens of different words. For instance, suffixes are placed after words in the English language to modify their meanings or function and utilised to produce a rich vocabulary; when English language learners analyse the word hopeless is formed of two morphemes: hope is a root word and the suffix -less meaning 'without something'. Similarly, fear is a single morpheme, and fearless has two morphemes: fear and -less, with the suffix -less, which alters the meaning of the root word fear. They will learn that when we put the suffix -less at the end of a word, this means 'without'. As a result, it assists their understanding of words and how they are formed. Then, they can apply their knowledge to examine unfamiliar words and figure out their meanings (Tabatabaei & Yakhabi, 2011). Thus, it will enhance their reading and lexical knowledge (Wysocki & Jenkins, 1987; Kieffer & DiFelice Box, 2013; Yücel-Koç, 2015; Crosson et al., 2018; Rabadi, 2019). For example, English language learners will understand words such as faultless, meaningless, and friendless.

Besides, Nassaji (2003) demonstrated that students use world knowledge most often, and the second most frequently used source of knowledge to find out the meaning of unfamiliar words is morphology. According to Stoller and Grabe (1995), by becoming

familiar with only a few stems, prefixes, and suffixes, students will recognise the meanings of many words; a root or a suffix can often give students clues to the meaning of dozens of words. Many words are learned by chance as they are heard or read rather than being taught directly, and morphology and context are two readily available sources of information for learning new words (Carlisle, 2007; Nagy & Scott, 1990). Learners with morphological awareness can access vocabulary by decoding it (Amirjalili & Jabbari, 2018), making word recognition more effortless and faster. Consequently, morphological awareness is essential for the proficient use of a language, and teaching morphemes can facilitate the acquisition of new words (Sukying, 2020). Furthermore, Wysocki (1987) stated that if students take advantage of morphological information, they will have a powerful synthesis tool to expand their vocabulary beyond words taught directly or words learned through context analysis.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Morphological Awareness

Morphology was coined in the early nineteenth century in a biological context, and its first recorded use was in writings by the German poet, novelist, playwright, and philosopher Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) in 1796; it was first used for linguistic purposes in 1859 by the German linguist August Schleicher to study the form of words (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011; Booij, 2012). The term "morphology" comes from Greek words and is a makeup of morph-, which means 'shape or form', and -ology, which means 'the study of something'. Compared to geologists, who utilise this term to study the configuration and evolution of landforms, biologists employ it to refer to the study of the form and structure of organisms (Oz, 2014). Besides, in linguistics, morphology is the study of words and their internal structure, investigates the relations between words based on their shared form and meaning as well as the mental process that is involved in word formation (Booij, 2012; O'Grady & Cuzman, 1997; Arnoff & Fudeman, 2005).

Morphemes, the morphological building blocks of words that incorporate roots, stems, prefixes, and suffixes, are the smallest unit of language with their own meaning or grammatical functions used to produce new, related words (Booij, 2012; Yule, 2010). There are two types of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes. "Free morphemes" can appear in isolation with a specific meaning (e.g. large in larger), whereas "bound morphemes" cannot stand alone, and they only ever appear when they are combined with another morpheme (e.g. -er in larger), prefixes and suffixes are known as two types of bound morphemes. Next, words are classified into two types: "simple words", which contain only one morpheme, and "complex words", created by combining two or more morphemes. In fact, most English words can be modified by the addition of prefixes and/or suffixes. For instance, the verb employ is a simple word since it has one morpheme. "Employee" is a complex word with the suffix -ee meaning 'a person who is the recipient of an action', which modifies the meaning of the root word employ; learners will discover that when we put the suffix -ee at the end of a word, this means 'a person'

such as referee, payee, trainee. Likewise, born is a single morpheme and reborn has two morphemes: born is the root word and re- is a prefix that gives the meaning of repeat or again to modify the root word born. At the same time, they might also work out the meaning of words like return, recycle, and replay. As Sparks and Deacon (2015) stated, the meaning of these morphologically complex words can often be inferred from the meanings of their constituent morphemes. Thus, learners who understand morphemes should be able to apply their knowledge to deduce the meaning of unknown words that they have not been taught directly.

The state of being aware of something is known as awareness. It is the ability to know immediately and sense events and feel or be aware of them. Another definition states that it is a state in which a person is aware of some information. That information is directly available to apply to a wide range of behavioural activities. The idea is frequently used interchangeably with consciousness and is also thought to be consciousness itself. The states of consciousness are linked to the states of experience; therefore, the structure of awareness is mirrored in the structure of experience.

Hence, morphological awareness refers to the learners' knowledge of recognition and comprehension of morphemes and morphemic structure to the application of significant word parts (Carlisle, 1995; Carlisle & Stone, 2003). Root words, prefixes, suffixes, and grammatical inflexions (e.g., -s or -es for plurals) are all examples of morphemes that can be added or removed from a word to modify its meaning. In Morin's (2003) research, she defines morphological awareness as the ability to manipulate morphemes and word development regulation in a language. According to Scott & Nagy (2004), morphological awareness is a vital metalinguistic tool for learners who want to utilise words efficiently and contribute to sustained vocabulary growth.

Considerable research conducted in this area assists learners in developing vocabulary acquisition in various ways. The following part will review some studies investigating the relationship between English language learners' morphological awareness and vocabulary size.

Firstly, 90 senior BA English Language and Literature students from Jordanian universities were studied by Rabadi (2019) to evaluate the correlation between morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. Two instruments were utilised to gather the data: (1) the Nation and Beglar's (2007) Vocabulary Size Test to examine the connection between morphological awareness and the performance of participants in simple words compared with complex words; and (2) two Morphological Awareness Tests adopted from Chang et al. (2005): The Morphemes Identification Test (Analytic Aspects), which contains 13 decontextualised items, measures the participants' capacity to analyse and break complex words into smaller units; The Morphological Structure Test (Synthetic Aspect), which contains 14 items, assesses students' morphological capability to combine morphemes to create new words. The result indicated that the participants had a vocabulary size at a mid-frequent level, reflecting their inability to form and utilise new words utilising morphemes. However, the researcher discovered a positive relationship between students' morphological awareness and vocabulary size. Finally,

the findings also show a positive correlation between the students' word complexity performance and their morphological awareness.

Next, the study by Khodadoust et al. (2013) investigated the relationship between English morphological awareness and receptive vocabulary knowledge of 86 undergraduate students majoring in English Translation. They utilised two measuring instruments to collect the data. The first one is the Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test to determine participants' receptive vocabulary knowledge. The next one is two morphological awareness tasks by McBride-Chang et al. (2005) (morpheme identification task and morphological structure test) were also used to assess the students' morphological awareness. The outcomes revealed a significant correlation between participants' morphological awareness and vocabulary size. They proposed pedagogical recommendations for teachers and textbook developers at the university level based on obtained results to enhance students' morphological and lexical knowledge. To conclude, they suggested that morphological awareness could be an effective strategy for Iranian university students to learn vocabulary. They also suggested replicating this study to investigate the differences in performance between men and women language learners in various contexts.

In another study, Tabatabaei and Yakhabi (2011) examined the connection between Iranian high school students' morphological awareness and vocabulary knowledge. The testing instruments were the Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) by Nation (2001) and the Morphological Awareness Test by McBride-Chang et al. (2005). The tests were divided into three sections. Part one was a 90-item Nation's Level Test. The Morpheme Identification Test (5 items) was part two, and the Morphological Structural Awareness Test was part three (20 items). The data showed that students fared better on the VLT's vocabulary test at the 2000 level than at the 3000 and 5000 levels.

Furthermore, it demonstrates a significant association between the two variables, vocabulary size and morphological awareness. Finally, these findings emphasise the importance of using morphological awareness as a strategy for students to learn English vocabulary. Researchers suggest that teachers should also provide explicit teaching on morphological analysis to students.

What's more, when it comes to learning vocabulary strategy, Amirjalili & Jabbari (2018) found that derivational morphological awareness can assist in automatic word identification. They stated that if students are aware of morphology, they should be able to access words by decoding, which may facilitate quicker and easier word recognition. Additionally, learners can expand their vocabulary more effectively when vocabulary is taught by morphological analysis instead of traditional teaching methods in class (Long & Rule, 2004). Moreover, Wysocki and Jenkins (1987) demonstrated that students would have a powerful synthesis tool to enhance their vocabulary beyond words taught directly or words learned through context analysis if they used morphological information. To summarise, there is a significant connection between morphological awareness and lexical knowledge. Thus, morphological awareness is a crucial factor in acquiring new vocabulary, as several studies have exhibited.

## 2.2 Vocabulary Acquisition

Vocabulary acquisition is the process of expanding one's vocabulary. An adequate vocabulary is necessary for academic success. It is essential to consider what would happen if a student did not comprehend the words written on her test. Vocabulary acquisition is indispensable to mastering a language (Schmitt, 2008). Vocabulary acquisition plays a pivotal role in language learning within the second or foreign language context. Since the second half of the twentieth century, vocabulary acquisition has piqued the interest of ESL and EFL practitioners. For L2 learners to become proficient and competent in English, the acquisition and learning of vocabulary are indispensable (Ahmad, 2012). EFL students who need to enhance the breadth and depth of their vocabulary knowledge to succeed in their academic and professional pursuits find sources of vocabulary acquisition for native-speaking learners through listening and reading (Stitch & James, 1984).

According to Ellis (1997), learning a new word entails identifying it as a word and adding it to our mental lexicon. Furthermore, Ellis (1997) maintains that *"the acquisition of L2 words usually involves a mapping of the word form onto pre-existing conceptual meanings."* Vocabulary acquisition is crucial to learning a language, particularly the English language, as evidenced by the work of Asgari and Mustapha (2011) and Gu (2003). In addition, many scholars state that vocabulary acquisition is incremental (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2000). Mastering a word requires several aspects of word knowledge, not all of which can be fully learned. Some aspects are mastered before others. For instance, Schmitt (2000) argued that learners might know a word's meaning or spelling but not its collocations. When learners are exposed to a word for the first time, they perceive some sense of form and meaning, but they do not completely master it. As the learner has a few more exposures, some other features of a word might be learned. Vocabulary acquisition has a profound implication for second language learners and has received attention from EFL formal teaching settings.

David (2003) states, *"A word is the smallest unit of grammar that can stand alone as a complete utterance, separated by spaces in written language and potentially by pauses in speech."* Words are the fundamental building blocks of language, serving as the units of meaning from which complex structures such as sentences, paragraphs, and whole texts are constructed Read (2000). Words may be classified based on their action and meaning, but defining them is challenging. There are thousands of words in a language. It is nearly hard to know all words with all their aspects. The branch of linguistics that studies word structures is called morphology. The branch of linguistics that studies word meanings is called lexical semantics.

According to researchers, morphological awareness may help with reading comprehension indirectly through vocabulary (e.g., Carlisle, 2007; McCutchen & Logan, 2011). Indeed, during elementary school, there are important links between children's morphological awareness and vocabulary (Nagy et al., 2006). Sandra (1994) claimed that knowing the morphological links between words can help organise the mental lexicon and make word acquisition easier (Bowers & Kirby, 2010; Nagy & Anderson, 1984).

As a result, vocabulary is inextricably linked to reading comprehension because grasping the meaning of individual words is crucial to comprehending the entire text (Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). Children with a higher level of morphological awareness may have an advantage in reading comprehension since they have a more extensive vocabulary.

To date, limited empirical evidence suggests that vocabulary may mediate the relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension. A study of pupils in grades 4–9 provides the most relevant evidence. Nagy et al. (2006) found that morphological knowledge contributed directly to reading comprehension and indirectly through vocabulary. In a study of fourth- and sixth-grade readers, McCutchen et al. (2008) found complete mediation by vocabulary but no unique role for morphological awareness in reading comprehension once language was included in the regression. All of these research point to vocabulary as a possible complete or partial mediator in the relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension.

Two recent studies directly compared word reading and vocabulary as mediators in the relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension. Kieffer and Box (2013) discovered that morphological awareness contributed directly to reading comprehension as well as indirectly through silent word reading and vocabulary in a study of sixth-grade pupils. Kieffer and Lesaux (2012) showed a direct contribution of morphological awareness to reading comprehension and an indirect influence through vocabulary in more considerable research of linguistically heterogeneous Grade 6 pupils, but no indirect effect of silent word reading in this study.

These slightly varied indirect effects must be understood in light of their measurement. The vocabulary and word reading measures in Kieffer and Lesaux (2012) were written in a format and read by students, implying that they both tested participants' reading abilities. As a result, the silent word reading and reading vocabulary tasks may have touched the same underlying construct (word reading) to some extent, explaining why only one unique indirect effect was detected. In contrast, the vocabulary test in Kieffer and Box (2013) was written but read aloud to students to reduce reading demands. However, these theories are speculative, and further study is needed to separate the possible mediating roles of word reading and vocabulary.

We must recognise it as a word and enter it into our mental lexicon to acquire vocabulary (Ellis, 1997). Furthermore, according to Ellis (1997), the acquisition of L2 words entails mapping the word form onto pre-existing conceptual meanings. Furthermore, many scholars assert that vocabulary development is a gradual process (Nation, 1990; Schmitt, 2000).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Research Design
The researchers used quantitative and qualitative methods to gather the necessary data for the study, including interviews, tests, and questionnaires. A questionnaire with a five-

point scale consisting of 24 questions and two open-ended questions is employed to collect information about how students perceive morphology on a personal level and to highlight the advantages and challenges of acquiring vocabulary through morphology. Then, a paper test is distributed to students to reinforce the reliability and validity of the data obtained from the multiple-choice questionnaire responses and to ensure their perception. In the interview, students are asked to verify their knowledge after passing the test. Their feedback will reveal more about the benefits of morphology and its difficulties in helping students learn vocabulary. Plus, we have selected four students with scores at four levels of morphological awareness (lack, medium, high, and complete) to ensure the diversity of the data.

## 3.2. Instruments

The three tools that the authors prepare for the survey to collect data include a test, a questionnaire, and an interview. The first data that the research team obtained was in the test part, the purpose of which was to assess the level of awareness of the morphology of the study subjects. Together, the authors designed a test, called the Morphology Test (MT) which has 2 sections. Section 1 includes 3 tasks that are finding the correct answer, highlighting the suffixes, and matching the words with the suffixes. In section 2, the research team selected a text with a lot of difficult and strange words, the participants will have to read and match them with the words in the box.

The questionnaire was chosen as one of the primary tools for collecting information from participants. A questionnaire tool was designed using Google Forms for survey-based research. Quantitative data were collected by distributing 49 copies of the questionnaire to participants from Can Tho University to assess their awareness of morphology. It consists of three main parts, with 24 questions in total. Before asking the main questions, the researcher asks the participants to answer some personal questions crucial to the research process. In the first part of the main questionnaire, the researcher polled participants about whether they had used morphology in their vocabulary learning before and their level of awareness about morphology. In addition, 20 questions were asked, with answers rated on a five-point scale: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The items were classified into five clusters focusing on students' perceptions of morphology and the benefits and challenges of morphology. Furthermore, two open-ended questions were designed to allow the participants to share their ideas easily. Each question in the survey was carefully crafted to guarantee clarity in order to assure its validity.

Another tool to collect more data regarding the students' awareness of morphology and assessment of the benefits of learning vocabulary through morphology and the challenges that students face when using the method for learning new words is the interview. There are six main questions raised, focusing on the perceptions of participants. The qualitative data collected from the interviews could satisfy the question of the benefits of morphology and whether students face challenges when using morphology in learning vocabulary. The outcomes would help draw out the pertinent

implications for this research issue. For the interviews, four people were picked at random. The number of participants is determined based on four levels of exam results: "High," "Medium," "Low," and "Lack."

Additionally, a friendly atmosphere for the online interview may generate ideal circumstances for the participants to express their ideas quickly. To enable the participants to express themselves freely and with depth throughout each interview, they were all done in Vietnamese. The interviews were Zoom-recorded and then meticulously written down to guarantee that the material might be understood.

**3.3 Participants**

The number of participants is 49 junior students at Can Tho University, with 12 males and 37 females who have studied the course on English morphology and syntax.

**4. Results**

**4.1. Morphological Awareness of English-majored Students (High-quality program)**
**4.1.1. Morphological Awareness of English-majored Students (High-quality program) through the Morphology Test**

To test the perception of morphology, we designed the Morphology Test consisting of 2 sections. Section 1 includes 3 tasks that are finding the correct answer, highlighting the suffixes, and matching the words with the suffixes. In section 2, the research team selected a text with 15 unknown words, the participants will have to read and match them with the words in the box. After the survey, the results showed that the students had a medium level of this subject, specifically as follows:

**Table 1:** Scores of students' morphology tests (n=49)

| Point segments | Number of tests obtained | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| >5 | 7 | 14.3% |
| 5-6 | 19 | 38.8% |
| 6-7 | 8 | 16.3% |
| 7-8 | 13 | 26.6% |
| 8-9 | 2 | 4% |
| 9-10 | 0 | 0% |

Table 1 demonstrates that most of the tests (85.7%) are above 5 points and only seven test papers (14.3%) are below the threshold of five points. There are 19 pieces of testing paper with score segments between 5 and 6 points, which makes up 38.8% of the total number of score segments. There are 23 results with a percentage of 46.9 when we combine the 6 to 7 and 7 to 9 score segments. Finally, there is no paper test for the area where they have a very high level of morphological knowledge.

### 4.1.2. Students Majoring in English Studies (High-quality program) Self-assess Their Morphological Awareness

In this research, a survey about the utilisation of morphology in vocabulary learning was undertaken among 40 high-quality English Studies students at Can Tho University. In order to investigate the relationship between students' ability to employ morphology effectively and to put this approach into practice by learning vocabulary. The poll is mostly based on the number of years that students have studied at the university and how they have used this technique to acquire vocabulary.
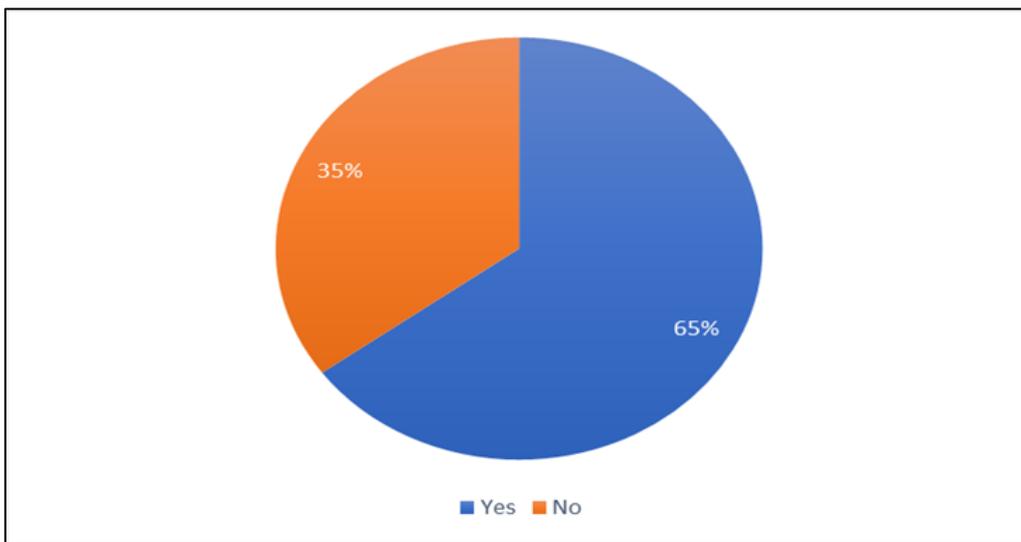


**Figure 1:** Statistics on the Percentage of Students Who Have Studied Morphology

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the majority of students have experienced the Morphology approach through terminology mastering at the university, accounting for roughly 65% of the overall vote, and the remaining students are only approximately 35%.
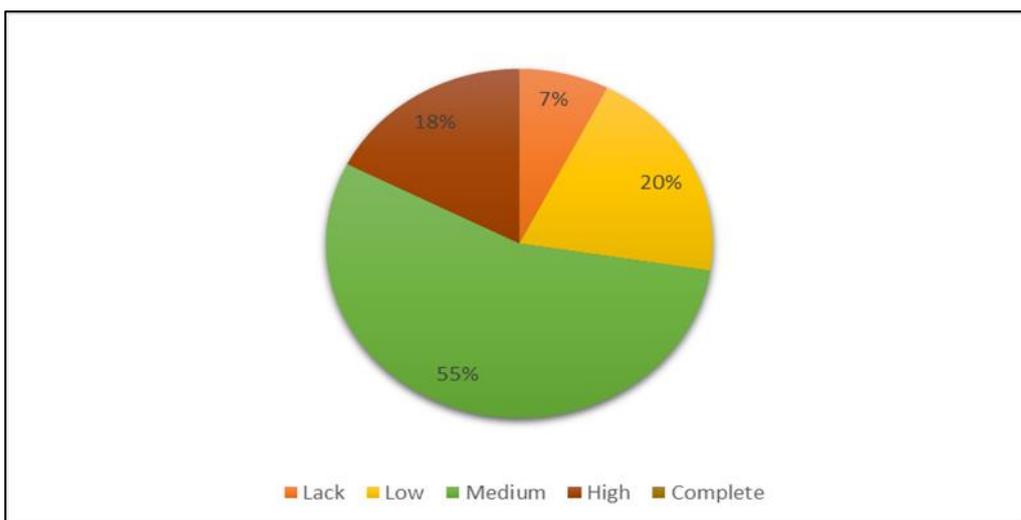


**Figure 2:** The Level of Morphological Awareness

As shown by the statistics in Figure 2, the majority of the surveyed students were aware of this learning strategy from their own vocabulary development. Out of the five cognitive levels, which ranged from "Lack" to "Complete", perhaps whole learners were not proficient in this form of instruction. As a result, nearly three-fifths of the students witnessed this theme, and rated "Medium", accounting for the greatest figure (55%, n= 40) among the five levels from "Lack" to "Complete". The remaining number of them (45%, n= 40), only chose three choices, respectively "Low", "High", and "Lack". They only evaluated themselves as "High" (17.5%, n=40), as opposed to "Complete". The biggest percentage among them was attributable to the perception level of "Medium", followed by "Low", being responsible for roughly 20% of the total, and finally, "Lack", accounting for the lowest percentage, 7.5%.

## 5. The Benefits and Challenges of Morphological Awareness

### 5.1. The Benefits of Morphological Awareness

When it comes to this aspect, most students realized morphology's great advantages from their previous experiences. Notably, the collected data from the open-ended questions aimed to give students the opportunity to express their personal opinions regarding morphology's advantages through learning terminology. The results demonstrate that most of the students responded with their individual perspectives. Given that neither neutral nor negative responses were provided in answer to the first open-ended question, it appeared that participants viewed this intervention as incredibly beneficial. For instance, they said that

*"The morphology can be applied to many different fields"*

*"Morphological awareness helps the students to spell the complex words and to remember its spelling easily"*

*"Being aware of morphology can help us guess the meaning of words in context"*

*"Being aware of the differences between morphemes in morphology can help translators use them correctly when translating"*

As can be seen that they responded how the intervention's technique assisted them in realizing several positive aspects from their prior experiences in a variety of fields. It is not simply a tool to help the capacity to learn vocabulary connected to the ability to absorb knowledge, but it is also regarded as a useful mechanism supporting students' output. One of the most crucial academic skills in the English language can be mentioned speaking and reading skills. In addition to basic words, morphology also assists them in more readily pronouncing complicated ones through the application of this technique. Furthermore, in the reading comprehension capacities, learners are aware that

morphology may support them to predict unfamiliar words from their context. Finally, the awareness of morphology may be applied by translators as well as language learners to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of their translations.

Furthermore, it was determined from the information gathered through interviews regarding students' actual knowledge of morphology that having a solid comprehension of this topic will assist students in obtaining new words. Although most of the students' awareness is only relative, they still understand the significance of morphology in vocabulary learning. There are many responses to the question about the benefits of having knowledge of prefixes and suffixes, many agree that if learners can identify the prefix and suffix in a word, it will be easier to guess the meaning of the word, and also save a lot of time without having to look up the dictionary.

Besides, learners also find that this is a very useful method because it helps them memorize vocabulary for longer, and above all, learners can also remember more from 3 to 4 other words (because they are word families) based on prefixes. There was another positive effect of using morphology, participants found that having awareness of prefixes and suffixes was key in identifying parts of speech and it was effective in listening tasks as well. The following extracts demonstrate the opinion of the interviewee on this issue:

*"…A word has many word families, so a combination of knowing one word and having knowledge of morphology will help me remember 3 or 4 more words…"* (Interviewee 1)

*"…I think if students know the prefixes and suffixes well, it will be easy to guess the meaning of words, and also save time."* (Interviewee 2)

*"When I encounter a strange word that has a familiar prefix or suffix, I can guess its meaning in an extremely quick way. Besides, I will remember that word for a long time, it's kind of impressive, I'll know the meaning when I see it again."* (Interviewee 3)

*"… Morphology saves me time in understanding vocabulary. In addition, it is very effective in determining the part of speech, especially when testing the listening part."* (Interviewee 4)

## 2.2. Challenges of Morphological Awareness

Aside from students' positive evaluations and viewpoints, in response to open-ended question 2, numerous people said that it is incredibly tough to perceive the previous knowledge at the university, from that they did not pay attention and did not use it actually in expanding their amount of new words. For instance, they stated:

*"Quite vague, as well as not knowing how to apply morphology in practice."*

*"Learning morphology is difficult for me to understand."*

*"Students are less interested in this subject because it is difficult to learn."*

*"Not too excited and not really concentrated on."*

Additionally, the findings also indicated that students had difficulty comprehending and studying morphology because there were many obstacles to overcome. One participant expressed that:

*"Today, students did not seem to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of morphology."*

The ability to be aware of morphology gets a lot of benefits to foreign language learners, however, students also face many difficulties in accessing this method. Most of the students interviewed said that morphology is complicated to use because it is an intensive field of linguistics, so students will have to spend a lot of time researching this field. Besides, they also shared that because this is a difficult learning method, they rarely use it to learn vocabulary. In Vietnamese, when a prefix or suffix is placed in each specific case, it will be translated in a different meaning, so it requires readers to think to be able to accurately translate the meaning of the word, therefore making the students quite confused, because they could not fully understand its meaning. Students also face the problem that there are lots of prefixes and suffixes, leading to them not being able to remember them all and sometimes confusion between words. Here are some excerpts from the interview:

*"For me, I see that there are many roots in English and also many meanings, when put in a word or a different context, it will be translated differently, it makes me have to think to find out its true meaning too, so it's very complicated."* (Interviewee 1)

*"…I find it quite difficult because I can't distinguish the root word like prefix or suffix as well as having too much knowledge that makes me confused."* (Interviewee 2)

*"…but it's too difficult so I don't apply it greatly."* (Interviewee 2)

*"Because morphology is a subject it is quite specialized in language, from my point of view, I see very few people who apply morphology to learning vocabulary, it is not popular, because it is too complicated and learners also have to spend a lot of time studying."* (Interviewee 3)

*"…but the roots are so weird that I can't do it, and there are so many prefixes and suffixes that I can't remember them all…"* (Interviewee 4)

## 5. Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the study's authors have made it possible to accurately resolve whether English-majoring students at Can Tho University (High-quality program) have a fundamental awareness of morphology based on test results and questionnaire responses. Besides, all students realise the merits of morphology. A series of analyses were conducted to determine whether or not the intervention was successful. The following statements will provide an outcomes summary of those analyses.

First, although nearly all students understand the significance of morphology, have studied English morphology, and have morphological awareness, the results from two research instruments indicate that learners in the research context only have an average understanding of morphology. Our results from the Morphology Test are similar to Rabadi's (2019) findings that participants are aware of morphology while learning vocabulary at a moderate level (65%), neither excellent nor proficient. This result indicates how poorly equipped the students are to cope with word morphology. EFL students' morphological awareness may be a reliable proxy for their vocabulary proficiency (Goodwin et al., 2013). However, the research results of Rabadi (2019) are contrary to our research results in terms of analysis and synthesis. Our findings demonstrate that students scored better on Tasks 1 and 3 of the Synthetic Aspect (matching and selecting the correct response) than on Task 2 of the Analytic Aspect (identifying the inflectional and derivational morphemes). They are unable to recognise and analyse free inflectional and derivational morphemes, as evidenced by their poor performance in Task 2. The cognitive domain of Bloom's taxonomy (1956) states that synthesis requires more highly developed skills than analysis. However, participants in this research performed well when dissecting the morphological structure.

There is a discrepancy between the findings and Hakan's results (2008) in section 2 of the test, which is a reading passage. Although the average percentage is not very high (57%), participants successfully infer the meaning from the paragraph and get more right responses. This result demonstrates their average level of morphological knowledge and capacity to infer meaning from roots, prefixes, and suffixes. A specific percentage of the answers to each question are also correct, with the highest percentage being 93.8% and the lowest percentage being 29.3%. In comparison, there are two sentences in Rakan's result (2008) where 100% of guesses are incorrect.

Hence, applying straightforward teaching methods of morphological instructions and morphological analysis in EFL and ESL classrooms is crucial based on the results of the Morphology Test that were previously indicated. According to several studies, morphological awareness has been linked to mastering oral and written language abilities, including reading comprehension and writing (Mechta, 2016; Qian, 2002). According to various studies, after becoming familiar with morphological analysis teaching, students have shown an aptitude for deducing the meanings of unfamiliar or complicated words (Gordon, 1989; Morin, 2003; Y cel-Ko, 2015; Zhang & Koda, 2012). According to Morin's research from 2003, explicitly teaching morphological units

improves students' receptive and productive vocabulary knowledge as well as their ability to acquire new words.

In addition to the morphological test results, the investigation also collected the individuals' responses to the survey question. The questionnaire and interview findings showed that most attendees were completely aware of both morphology's positive and negative aspects. It demonstrates that students are aware of the morphological analysis's importance. Apart from employing traditional learning tactics such as basic memorisation, repetition, and making vocabulary notes, it has been demonstrated that English-majoring students still tend to explore vocabulary expansion strategies through morphology. Therefore, it is essential to mention the benefits of morphological awareness students recognised and expressed through these two research instruments.

Firstly, from their prior experiences, a large number of students were aware of the various merits of morphology in this regard. As students majoring in English Studies, the knowledge of morphology and the capability of morphological analysis plays a vital role during the learning process. Instead of utilising other vocabulary acquisition techniques, morphology supports word formation and modifies existing ones (Fasold, 2006). Thanks to morphological knowledge from words' affixes and suffixes, students can employ a variety of alternatives (unlike, likely, unlikely, likeable, unlikeable, likeness, unlikeness) to change the meaning of the word "like" and adequately convey their ideas. Aside from the flexibility of language, morphology was also evaluated as one of the most productive applications of vocabulary acquisition, shortening the learning vocabulary process as well as enhancing memorising ability. Similar to the prior studies of Sukying (2020), morphological awareness is essential for learners to use the language proficiently since it helps speed up learning new words.

Secondly, morphological awareness is a crucial factor in acquiring new vocabulary. However, when we conducted this study with the title "Morphological awareness of students majoring in English studies towards lexical acquisition", more and more perspectives reflected this tactic during their learning language process. Given that morphological analysis not only assists the acquisition of new vocabulary but also is an appealing supporting tool to create foundational knowledge from exact words with the understanding of their root, and then perceive brilliantly in every aspect, especially a total of four academic skills in English.

On the whole, the results of the inquiry show that even though most students in the research setting are aware of the importance of morphological analysis, they still need to fully exploit their available potential due to some of the barriers mentioned above.

## 6. Conclusion

This article aims to determine if English Studies majors in high-quality programs are capable of understanding linguistic morphology as they learn new vocabulary. Additionally, the study assesses the efficacy of the method of vocabulary acquisition through morphology for learners. Survey data and research reveal that most students

have a fairly average understanding of morphology as they learn vocabulary, which is sufficient for them to function. used to make word guesses from text. As a result, the research has also assessed the benefits and drawbacks that students believe this strategy has when they are acquiring vocabulary.

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## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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