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ỨNG DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP PHÂN TÍCH HÌNH THÁI HỌC TRONG GIẢNG DẠY ĐỌC HIỂU: TRƯỜNG HỢP SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ TIẾNG ANH

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TỪ KHÓA

Hình thái học;
Chiến lược tách thành phần từ;
Học từ vựng;
Đọc hiểu;
Giảng dạy tiếng anh.

TÓM TẮT

Phân tích hình thái học đã thu hút sự chú ý lớn trong nghiên cứu về học từ vựng và phát triển ngôn ngữ. Trong đó, chiến lược tách thành phần từ (word part strategy) của Nation (2001) được coi là một phương pháp hữu ích giúp người học hiểu rõ nghĩa từ và tiếp thu từ vựng hiệu quả. Bài viết này tập trung vào việc áp dụng chiến lược này để kiểm tra hiệu quả của nó trong việc hiểu các từ vựng khó trong bài đọc. Nghiên cứu hành động được thực hiện với 35 sinh viên chuyên ngữ tiếng Anh tại Đại học Lương Thế Vinh. Kết quả cho thấy chiến lược tách thành phần từ mang lại hiệu quả tích cực trong việc giúp sinh viên hiểu nghĩa các từ riêng biệt. Tuy nhiên, phương pháp này vẫn cần cải thiện để nâng cao hiệu quả trong việc hiểu nghĩa từ trong bài đọc. Nghiên cứu này là cơ sở để các nghiên cứu tiếp theo khám phá ứng dụng chiến lược tách thành phần từ trong việc học từ vựng và cải thiện kỹ năng đọc hiểu trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh.

APPLYING MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS METHOD IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION: A CASE STUDY OF ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Morphological analysis has attracted significant attention in vocabulary learning and language development research. Among various morphological studies, the word part strategy proposed by Nation (2001) is considered an effective method for understanding word meanings and acquiring vocabulary. This article focuses on applying the word part strategy to assess its effectiveness in understanding challenging vocabulary in reading comprehension. An action research study was conducted with 35 English major students at Luong The Vinh University. The results showed that the word part strategy was effective in helping students understand individual word meanings. However, the method still needs improvement to enhance its effectiveness in understanding word meanings within reading texts. This study serves as a foundation for further research on applying the word part strategy in vocabulary learning and improving reading comprehension in English language teaching.

1. INTRODUCTION

Applying morphological analysis to deal with vocabulary in reading comprehension is not a new issue in EFL research. For many decades, several studies have tried to investigate the relationship between morphological awareness and reading comprehension (Carlisle, 2000; Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2007). One of the typical strategies for morphological analysis is word part strategy which was established by Nation (2001) in order to infer word meaning. The application of word part strategy to vocabulary learning was developed by Xinjie (2011) to generate the understanding of unfamiliar words as well as develop vocabulary learning. In this study, word part strategy was conducted to check its efficiency on improving reading comprehension for English majors at Luong The Vinh University. Moreover, basing on what have been learned from word part strategy, students not only develop their reading skills but also enrich their lexical knowledge.

2. CONTENT

2.1.Morphological application and reading comprehension

In the copious land of language studies, the relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary is one of classical fields which attract a vast number of EFL researchers. Grabe (2008) stated that "vocabulary growth leads to improve reading comprehension, and amount of reading leads to vocabulary growth" (p.266). Indeed, vocabulary is an important key which decides the success or failure of EFL readers. Whereas, lacking of vocabulary is also one of the huge challenges for EFL learners when they have to face unfamiliar words on reading texts. Obviously, reading comprehension not only requires students good reading skills but also an available source of vocabulary to understand what they read. According to Lehr et al (2004), students who do not have wide vocabulary or effective word-learning strategies often struggle to achieve comprehension. The issue of unfamiliar words in reading text promoted the development of different techniques or strategies in order to help EFL learners understand unfamiliar words in reading contexts in a less demanding manner. Among several learning strategies to deal with unfamiliar words, analyzing word structure or morphological analysis is one of a typical approach to achieve word meaning. Nation (2001, p. 264) stated that:

A knowledge of affixes and roots has two values for a learner of English: it can be used to help the learning of unfamiliar words by relating these words to known words or to known prefixes and suffixes, and it can be used as a way of checking whether an unfamiliar word has been successfully guessed from context.

Because of these values, Nation (2001) originated the notion of word part strategy as the way to apply the knowledge of morphology, such as Latin and Greek roots, as well as inflectional and derivational affixes (prefixes and suffixes) to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words. Several researchers (White et al., 1989; Carlisle, 2000; Kuo & Anderson, 2006; Kieffer &Lesaux, 2007; Harris, 2010) developed the idea of morphological application on their studies to investigate whether or not the use of morphological analysis could offer word reading and reading comprehension. Generally, the knowledge of morphological analysis can contribute significantly to the understanding of word reading as well as the improvement of reading comprehension for English learners. However, it should be taken appropriately in order to create the effectiveness on reading comprehension.

2.2 Word part strategy

In English language, word parts can be defined as the structure of words, including basically affixes (i.e. prefixes, suffixes) and roots. According to Nation (2001, p. 263), "most of the content words of English can change their form by adding prefixes or suffixes".

Theoretically, word part strategy is known as an intentional approach to vocabulary learning which applies the morphological knowledge to analyze every part of a complex word. In another word, the use of word part strategy facilitates learners' ability to identify word structure in order to achieve English lexis for comprehensive purpose. Nation (2001, p. 278) defined word part strategy for learning unfamiliar words into two steps:

• First, break the unknown word into parts. This step requires learners to be able to recognize prefixes and suffixes when they occur in words.

• Second, relate the meaning of the word parts to the meaning of the word. This step requires learners to know the meanings of the common word parts. It also requires learners to be able to re-express the dictionary definition of a word to include the meaning of its prefix and, if possible, its root and suffixes.

Following these steps, learner firstly need to get knowledge about word components, such as affixes or roots, to distinguish and split them up into parts. Then, it is of more importance, learners need to connect the meaning of these parts to conclude a unique definition for the word. Additionally, the word should be re-expressed its definition in dictionary to compare with the previous definition from connecting word parts. These are some examples from Nation (2001).

Word	**Dictionary definition**	**Reworked definition**
unaccountable	Does not seem to have any sensible explanation	*Not able* to be explained

Table 2.1. Examples of word part strategy (Nation, 2001, p. 279)

What can be seen from the example is that there are two definitions for each word, a dictionary definition and a reworked definition. Basing on the two steps of word part strategy, a word should be firstly analyzed into separated parts. For example, the word "*unaccountable*" contains prefix "*un-*", free root "*account*", and suffix "*-able*". After recognizing word parts to break them down, the second step will relate the meaning of each part to infer the meaning of the whole word. Particularly, the prefix "*un-*" (means not),

free root "*account*" (means an explanation), and suffix "*-able*" (means can be done or can be able to) can become "*not able to be explained*", and this reworked definition nearly contains the same meaning with dictionary definition "does not seem to have any sensible explanation".

By the process of word part strategy, learners can see the connection between the meanings of word parts and the meaning of the completely new word, and they can also see how roots or affixes manipulate to form a definition. There are hundreds of derivational affixes and bound roots in English language which convey different meaning and functions. Blevins (2001) figured out the most common prefixes and suffixes as well as some common bound roots in English which are also divided into Latin roots and Greek roots. Understanding the derivational affixes and bound roots can partly expand the lexical knowledge and also deal with complication from unfamiliar words.

The Twenty Most Frequent Prefixes			
Prefix	Words with the Prefix	Prefix	Words with the Prefix
un- (not, opposite of)	782	pre- (before)	79
Re- (again)	401	inter- (between, among)	77
in-, im-, ir-, il- (not)	313	fore- (before)	76
dis- (not, opposite of)	216	de- (opposite of)	71
en-, em- (cause to)	132	trans- (across)	47
non- (not)	126	super- (above)	43
in-, im- (in or into)	105	semi- (half)	39
over- (too much)	98	anti- (against)	33
mis- (wrongly)	83	mid- (middle)	33
sub- (under)	80	under- (too little)	25

Table 2.2. The twenty most common prefixes and their meanings (Blevins, 2001, p. 206)

The Twenty Most Frequent Suffixes			
Suffix	Words with the Suffix	Suffix	Words with the Suffix
-s, -es (plurals)	31%	-ity, -ty (state of)	1%
-ed (past-tense verbs)	20%	-ment (action or process)	1%
-ing (verb form/present participle)	14%	-ic (having characteristics of)	1%
-ly (characteristic of)	7%	-ous, -eous, -ious (possessing the qualities of)	1%
-er, -or (person connected with)	4%	-en (made of)	1%
-ion, -tion, -ation, -ition (act, process)	4%	-er (comparative)	1%
-ible , -able (can be done)	2%	-ive, -ative, -itive (adjective form of a noun)	1%
-al, -ial (having characteristics of)	1%	-ful (full of)	1%
-y (characterized by)	1%	-less (without)	1%
-ness (state of, condition of)	1%	-est (comparative)	1%

Table 2.3. The twenty most common prefixes and their meanings (Blevins, 2001, p. 215)

Common Latin Roots[38]		
Audi	*Hear*	Audience, auditorium, audible, inaudible, audition
Dict	*Speak*	Dictate, predict, contradict, verdict, diction
Port	*Carry*	Import, export, portable, porter, transport
Rupt	*Break*	Abrupt, bankrupt, erupt, interrupt, rupture
Scrib/script	*Write*	Describe, inscribe, prescribe, scribe, describe, script, transcript, prescription
Spect	*See*	Inspect, respect, spectacles, spectator, suspect, perspective
Struct	*Build*	Construct, destruct, destruction, instruct, structure
Tract	*Pull, drag*	Attract, detract, contract, subtract, traction, tractor
Vis	*See*	Visible, supervise, vision, visionary
Common Greek Roots		
Auto	*Self*	Automobile, automatic, autograph, autotrophy, autobiography
Bio	*Life*	Biography, biology, biodegradable, biome, biopsy, antibiotic,
Graph	*Written or drawn*	Graph, graphic, graphite, seismograph
Hydro	*Water*	Dehydrate, hydrogen, hydrant, hydrodynamic, hydraulic, hydrophobic
Meter	*Measure*	Barometer, centimeter, diameter, thermometer
Ology	*Study of*	Geology, biology, hydrology
Photo	*Light*	Photograph, photocopy, photogenic, photosynthesis, photoelectric
Scope	*See*	Microscope, periscope, stethoscope, telescope
Tele	*Far, distant*	Telephone, telescope, telecast, telegram
Therm	*Heat*	Thermometer, thermos, thermal, thermosphere

Table 2.4. The common Latin roots and Greek roots (Blevins, 2001, p. 230)

Otherwise, with the addition of different affixes, a root can transform into many new words which contain the same root and related meaning, known as word families (e.g. nation, national, nationality, etc.). The diversity of word parts is the reason for the numerous of English words, so understanding about word parts can be a useful way to acquire vocabulary as well as to achieve the language.

Word part strategy was developed by Xinjie (2011) with the positive result that this strategy is useful in helping students to understand unfamiliar words as well as facilitate vocabulary learning, especially students who have a good knowledge of affixes. In order to demonstrate the Nation's value about guessing unfamiliar words from context by morphological analysis, this paper aims to investigate whether or not word part strategy can create the effectiveness on both learning unfamiliar words and guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from reading context. Therefore, the first value is word part strategy can be used to help the learning of unfamiliar words, and the second one can be used as a way of checking whether an unfamiliar word has been successfully guessed from context.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

In order to investigate the effectiveness of word part strategy on reading for English majored students at Luong The Vinh University, the action research was designed to capture aims of the study by the following four stages.

• Stage 1: Planning. The first step of an action research is the awareness of a problem to create a plan or a possible action to take. The problem in this study is the difficulty of English majored students to understand unfamiliar words on reading comprehension at Luong The Vinh University. 35 students in the same class performed the first test to identify their ability to reading comprehension before the action. Then, lesson plans for four sections were generated to apply word part strategy for students to improve their reading problems. The lesson plan for each day would include two parts. The first part introduced the most common word parts (affixes and roots) conducted by Belvins (2001) (Table 2.2, 2.3, 2.4) to students to memorize the meaning of these word parts and their examples. In the second part, students would practice how to analyze these word parts from vocabulary in reading texts as well as try to guess word meaning by applying word part strategy. However, lesson plans could be changed in order to appropriate to the ability of students through the action time.

• Stage 2: Acting. The plan was performed to the class Reading 3 of the sophomore who were studying Morphology. Firstly, students did the first test on to check their level before the appliacation. Next, the researcher would carry out the four-week lesson plans for students at the class Reading 3. Finally, the second test was conducted in order to check the progress of students after four-week learning word part strategy. Additionally, after the second test, the researcher interviewed four participants in order to find out how they felt about the implication of word part strategy on their reading class.

• Stage 3: Observing. Over the four class sections, the researcher directly observed and evaluated the improvement of the students using word part strategy. The observation depended on the two main criteria about whether or not students use word part strategy to infer the meaning of

unfamiliar words, and the use of word part strategy positively influences reading text.

• Stage 4: Reflecting. In this final step, the results of tests, interview answers, and observation were evaluated to reflect the process of the action plan. It would decide the improvement or some weaknesses in the study as well as suggest any changes to develop the further plan.

3.2 Participants and instruments

The subject of the study was 35 sophomores in Faculty of English language at Luong The Vinh University. These students are in the same class at the age of 19-20. They were studying Reading 3 and Morphology at the same time, so they had some basic morphological knowledge. A meeting was held to introduce the methods, purposes, and the schedule of the study to participants to guarantee that they understand and seriously take part in the research process.

The instruments of this study included a lesson plan for 4-class sections based on the syllabus of Reading 3 course, the first test and the second test conducted before and after the teaching sections, and interview questions carried out after completing the second test to get more opinions of students about the application of word part strategy to their reading comprehension. The results of first test and second test from the students were compared to determine the effectiveness of word part strategy on reading comprehension after the treatment. These variables were conducted by paired samples T-test in SPSS software program to calculate the differences of the two test results.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSION

4.1 Morphological application of word part strategy to infer the meaning of unfamiliar words

In order to know how students can infer word meaning by the application of word part strategy, part 1 in the first test and the second test figured out the number of unfamiliar words that students could elicit the meaning. Every test includes five unfamiliar words in part 1. The result was calculated by descriptive analysis to determine the frequencies of unfamiliar words inferred in the tests. Table 4.1 below shows the percentages of words which 35 students could guess the meaning before they learnt word part strategy.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 word	4	11.4	11.4	11.4
	1 word	6	17.1	17.1	28.6
	2 words	10	28.6	28.6	57.1
	3 words	9	25.7	25.7	82.9
	4 words	4	11.4	11.4	94.3
	5 words	2	5.7	5.7	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.1. The number of unfamiliar words inferred the meaning before applying word part strategy

Table 4.2 shows the result of unfamiliar words which the students could infer in the second test. After four weeks learning word part strategy, the students conducted the second test having similar format but different content from the first test. At this time, after the experience of 4 learning sections, the results had a positive change on the number of words which they could infer the meaning. Particularly, the highest percentages of words in this test are three words at 37.1% and four words at 34.3 %. Besides, the number of students who can infer the meaning of all five unfamiliar words surprisingly rose from 5.7% in the first test to 20% in the second test. One of the significant changes in the second test was that no students inferred less than 2 words while this number in the first test was approximately 30%. Apparently, what students learned from word part strategy could develop their ability on guessing the meaning of unknown words.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0 word	0	0	0	0
	1 word	0	0	0	0
	2 words	3	8.6	8.6	8.6
	3 words	13	37.1	37.1	45.7
	4 words	12	34.3	34.3	80.0
	5 words	7	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	35	100.0	100.0	

Table 4.2. The number of unfamiliar words inferred the meaning after applying word part strategy

Table 4.3 describes the average number of unfamiliar words which the students inferred in the first test and the second test. As can be seen, the mean of the first test was 2.66 lower than that value of the second test at 3.66. These statistics indicated that there was an increase of words which students could provide the meaning after the application of word part strategy. Obviously, before employing this strategy, students could understand about two unfamiliar words out of five words in the first test. However, this number rose to three words and more than three words in the second test. In other words, the word knowledge from word part strategy can assist these English majors to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First test part 1	2.26	35	1.358	.230
	Second test part 1	3.66	35	.906	.153

Table 4.3. The average number of words inferred in the first test and the second test

From the analyzed data, it can be drawn that the results of this study aligned with Xinjie's research (2011). In particular, the number of unfamiliar words which the students could infer the meaning improved significantly from the first test to the second test of the research. Besides, by the observation of researcher through four teaching sections, when students practiced analyzing unfamiliar words in class, they could recognize roots and affixes in a word and split them into parts. It can be said that English majored students can easily get through the first step of word part strategy from Nation's theory. The second step of the strategy is the difficulty with some students when it requires learners to relate the meaning of word parts to the meaning of the whole word.

4.2 Morphological application of word part strategy to understand word meaning to reading comprehension

The second research question aims to find out that whether or not the use of word part strategy can improve English majored students to understand the meaning of unfamiliar words in reading texts. In this part, every test contains a reading text with two vocabulary tasks. Students carried out these tasks basing on guessing the meaning of some vocabulary from the text. The test scores of the first test and the second test were conducted by paired samples T-test to figure out the differences between the two tests before and after the use of word part strategy. The three tables below perform the total scores of the first test and the second test through paired samples statistics, paired samples correlations, and paired samples test.

First, Table 4.4 contains statistical information about the total score of the first test and the total score of the second test variables. The highest score of every test is 10 which includes all parts. It's can be seen that mean score of the first test is 6.0 while mean score of the second test is approximately 7.8. Obviously, the test scores of 35 students have a rapid change after learning word part strategy for four sections. The next table 4.5 contains a correlation value measuring how closely related the two test score variables are to each other. In this case, correlation of variables is 0.655 ($r = 0.655 < 0.8$; $p < 0.001$). It means that there is a slightly strong relationship between the first test and the second test. Besides, there is no minus sign preceding the coefficient, so the relationship is positive.

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First test total score	6.0000	35	1.09477	.18505
	Second test total score	7.8929	35	1.53067	.25873

Table 4.4. Paired samples statistics of the two tests

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	First test total score & Second test total score	35	.655	.000

Table 4.5. Paired samples correlations of the two tests

In paired samples T-test, the most important statistic is Table 4.6 which displays the difference between two means. What can be seen in this table is the p-value (2-tailed Sig. value) is 0.000 (when the Sig. value is 0.05 or less, the probability that the difference between the two means was due to chance is 5% or less). This number indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the test scores of the first test and the second test ($t34 = -9.65$; $p < 0.05$). Particularly, the second test scores are approximately 1.89 points higher than the first test scores.

		Paired Differences				
					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper
Pair 1	First test total score - Second test total score	-1.89286	1.16045	.19615	-2.29148	-1.49423

Table 4.6. Paired samples test of the two tests

During four teaching sections at class Reading 3, 35 students had some visible changes when they could apply morphological knowledge of word part strategy on reading text. On every section, students learned about 10 word parts at the beginning of the section, then they used what they have just learned to identify some unfamiliar words in their reading text. In this way, students can practice the strategy as well as can be aware of the role of word parts on deriving unknown words in reading context. Both tests contain reading texts and vocabulary tasks basing on unfamiliar words from the reading. As a result, the analysis of paired samples T-test on the test scores indicated that there is a significant difference between the first test and the second test. In another word, the use of word part strategy could create a positive effect on word understanding for reading.

In order to clarify students' opinion about the use of word part strategy, the first question of the interview aims to know how students think about using the strategy to infer the meaning of unknown words in Part 1 of the two tests. There are some students who get high scores at both tests reported that it was not so difficult to guess word meaning when they have already known affixes and roots. However, a majority of students still need more time to learn about the strategy. The second question of the interview focuses on whether or not word part strategy improves to students' understanding of unfamiliar words to reading comprehension. Apparently, although the application of word part strategy has a positive outcome on reading test, it still exists some restriction for English majored students. Some students agreed that they could understand many new words from the reading text by using word part strategy. However, other students admitted that they could not see the improvement of the strategy on reading comprehension, though they have known the advantages of analyzing word parts to understand unfamiliar words.

4.3 Discussion

According Xinjie's suggestion (2011), word part strategy is helpful when working out the meaning of words, but much more time is needed to learn the meaning of affixes and how to use word parts. One of the different points between Xinjie's research and the current study is that Xinjie just focused on the use of affixes in word part strategy while this study introduced some common root words on the strategy (Table 2.4). As a result, students can identify word meaning effectively if they know both roots and affixes meaning. Some students considered that they could not guess a word meaning by affixes only, they also need root meaning. In short, the use of word part strategy can make a contribution to understand word meaning of unknown words for English majors at Luong The Vinh University. Students can use the morphological knowledge to develop their vocabulary. Nevertheless, as already explained, time for practice is an important element of word part strategy to help students using it efficiently in the wide range of language, especially in reading comprehension.

About the finding form the interview, although many students have known the advantages of analyzing word parts to understand unfamiliar words, they could not see the improvement of the strategy on reading comprehension. This finding was quite similar with few previous studies. Aarnoutse and Tomesen (1998) and Harris (2010) had the same negative outcome that morphological analysis improves students' ability to derive meaning of unfamiliar words but does not impact to reading comprehension. However, those studies just focused on affixes, while the current study develop the strategy on both roots and affixes.

In fact, students still see the helpfulness of the strategy in improving reading, but they're lacking of morphological knowledge to acquire more words in learning.

The findings of this paper included two main points. Firstly, the number of unfamiliar words inferred by English majors increased partly from the first test to the second test. It can be admitted that the morphological application of word part strategy can make a great contribution to guess the meaning of unknown words of students. Secondly, there is a significant difference between the reading test scores before and after the implication of word part strategy for students. In other words, the use of word part strategy might somehow provide a positive outcome to improve the understanding of unfamiliar words for students on reading. However, the application of the strategy on reading text have not made a total effect on understanding unknown words' meaning.

5. CONCLUSION

The study took the action research to find out the morphological application of word part strategy to understand unfamiliar words on reading for English majors. Basing on the results of two tests and feedback from students, the study generalized several results. First of all, the use of word part strategy can help English majored students to infer meaning of unfamiliar words by morphological analysis. Secondly, word part strategy can make a positive contribution to reading comprehension.

In spite of several positive findings from the application of word part strategy, the current study has existed some limitations which affected the validity and reliability of results. One of the considerable restrictions in this action research is time limitation. Students just learned word part knowledge and practiced the strategy during four sections. Hence, the limited time was not enough to offer them a deep understanding on the use of word part strategy. Besides, some parts of the lesson plan should be changed at the teaching method in order to help students to practice the new strategy effectively. Further research should be surmounted these limitations and carried out the wide range to investigate the effectiveness of word part strategy on different level of students. The present study might be a basically starting point for future research who interests in applying word part strategy for EFL learners.

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