Research Article

The Effect of Morphological Awareness on Lexical Knowledge of Grade 7 Learners

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ABSTRACT

There have been studies attesting that morphological awareness could develop vocabulary; yet several articles argued that lexis is a more encompassing linguistic feature than vocabulary. Hence, this quasi-experimental study sought to investigate the effect of morphological awareness on lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners in a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato. Two groups with 45 learners each were selected to form the control and experimental groups. The two groups had a satisfactory performance and showed no significant difference in their scores in the beginning of the study. Then, they received the same 12-hour intervention within two weeks. Through dependent samples t-test, the result indicated that there was a significant difference between their scores in the beginning and end of the intervention. Moreover, through independent samples t-test, the result indicated that there was a significant difference between the scores of control and experimental groups in the end of the intervention. The experimental group that received the treatment showed a higher level of lexical knowledge than the control group. Thus, the study concluded that morphological awareness was effective on developing lexical knowledge among Grade 7 learners.

Keywords: *Morphological awareness, Vocabulary, Lexical knowledge, Meaning, Polysemy, Synonymy, Collocates, Quasi-experiment*

Introduction

Among any other functional skills it serves, reading as an essential life skill makes it an indispensable form of activity (Yaseen, 2013). Experts supported this notion because they, too, believed that having been able to read, an individual survives practically in life. Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson (1985) considered reading a lifelong skill to be used at school and throughout life. With the ability to read, windows for social engagement and doors to personal fulfillment are probably wide open.

To nurture reading, it is basic to know that decoding, fluency, vocabulary, sentence construction, reasoning, and attention are keys (Lee, 2023). Once mastered, they will yield

many beneficial results in almost all life aspects of an individual. That is why many dynamic efforts were expended to develop these sub-skills in a child's early developmental stage, not only at school but also at home. The key relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension is dominantly noteworthy in the vast amount of literature available online concerning these sub-skills. This presupposition becomes widespread all over the globe, which leads to the idea that word power is critical and, therefore, paramount to a successful reading.

To Terry (2022), vocabulary directly impacts reading. In his teaching practice, he noted one child who can articulate words beautifully but went blank when asked what she read. He, therefore, started to devise his teaching strategies around vocabulary development. Lawrence et al. (2021) had the same take on the matter, stating that knowledge of words, particularly learned through regular exposure to school texts, is meant for successful reading. They coined it academic vocabulary. Through words with which learners get familiar, they enrich their vocabulary bank and can use them for understanding materials.

However, many schoolchildren and young adults struggle with reading despite our conscious grasp of the upright entailment of vocabulary to reading comprehension. The world has recorded the growing problems in reading among individuals, regardless of age, every year. For instance, the study of D'Angelo, Krenca, and Chen (2022) showed that poor readers of first and third graders in both English and French language scored the lowest on vocabulary tests suggesting that vocabulary may contribute to their poor reading comprehension. Similarly, the third, fourth, and fifth graders at Gazi University in Turkiye demonstrated reading at a frustration level and were therefore advised to undergo remediation programs (Gedik and Akyol, 2022). The same case is sighted in the Philippines; articles reporting Filipino learners' performance in global tests have aroused the academe's and government's concern. May it be in areas of Mathematics, Science, or English, the ranking of the Philippines seems to drop every after year. For instance, in the 2018 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), 15-year-old Filipino high school learners ranked the lowest among 79 participating countries in reading comprehension (San Juan, 2019). The result alarmed concerned educators and warned many stakeholders regarding the low performance of the country. Overall, UNICEF reported that 64% of 10-year-old children could not cover the minimum proficiency in reading comprehension. This percentage is up from the pre-pandemic's 52%.

To investigate and provide help on this matter, this research attempted to assess whether certain interventions would improve learners' word power. Nevertheless, it was not only particular on learners' ability to recognize the meaning of a word alone but also all its associates, such as polysemy, collocation, synonymy, and ambiguity. This knowledge is called lexical knowledge. In the reviewed related literature, it was proven effective to language abilities of the learners (Coady and Huckin, 1997; Griffiths, 2003; Shen, 2008). Successful comprehension of a text could be derived from the improved lexical knowledge of an individual (Marshall and Guillmor, 2002).

With this aim to improve the lexical knowledge of the learners, the researcher believed that morphological awareness could be helpful in doing so. According to Khodadoust, et. al., (2013), learners who were trained to use their knowledge of word units or morphology could perform well in literacy tests; to Carlisle (2011), morphological awareness has been proven a helpful contributory factor in improving reading too. With the awareness on single units of words and their meanings, learners could exemplify remarkable literacy development. Thus, the researcher used morphological awareness to improve lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners in a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato.

Objectives
The main aim of this research was to assess the effect of morphological awareness as an intervention on the lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners in a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato. Specifically, it determined (1) the level of lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners before the intervention; (2) the significant difference between the pre-test scores of control and experimental groups

before the intervention; (3) the significant difference between the pre- test and post-test scores of the control group; (4) the significant difference between the pre- test and post-test scores of the experimental group; and (5) the significant difference between the post-test scores of control and experimental groups after the intervention.

Conceptual Framework

The morphological awareness is the independent variable of the study which aimed to significantly affect the lexical knowledge, the dependent variable of the study.

Figure 1

Conceptual Framework
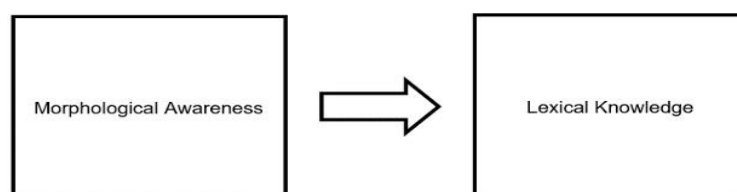
Note. Morphological awareness= independent variable, lexical knowledge= dependent variable.

Significance of The Study

The results of this study could be beneficial to the following:

Administration: The study's findings can provide substantial information regarding the effectiveness of morphological awareness in students' lexical knowledge. By this, the administration could devise schemes to improve learners' lexical knowledge which includes word networks related to linguistics other than vocabulary.

Department, Academic, and Curriculum Heads: The study's findings can be a basis to develop or revise curriculum, if needed, and teaching strategies to emphasize the need for improving learners' lexical knowledge. This can enhance the quality of teaching and learning experiences in the department, particularly in languages, and support the overall academic goals of the school.

Language Teachers: The study's findings can help teachers decide on designing their instructional methods and delivery by considering the effectiveness of morphological awareness in learners' lexical knowledge. The results transpired from the study can be utilized by the language teachers to further investigate the nature and other aspects of lexis as a linguistic element in learners' overall academic success.

Parents: The study's findings can assist parents in helping and monitoring their children in lexical development. Any cause of improvement in the word power of learners through the intervention could benefit parents' conscious effort in teaching their children at home. The parents may utilize the results of the study by gaining awareness about the role of words on their children's literacy success.

Grade 7 Learners: The study's findings can inform junior high school learners about the strategies they can consider and use in developing their vocabulary and lexical knowledge. Consequently, they can also develop such knowledge as a fundamental tool in improving reading comprehension.

Literature: The study's findings can update the academic literature concerning issues and problems in literacy, particularly reading and writing. The data can inform the people in general that other than word meaning, various linguistic networks such as polysemy, collocates, synonymy and the like can be factors in affecting the literacy performance of the learners.

Future Researchers: The research can provide a foundation for future research on developing learners' vocabulary, lexis, reading comprehension, and other related linguistic elements to language learning. While there are vast literature concerning on vocabulary as a linguistic element in any language learning such as reading, the future researchers should stretch their interest and effort in studying

lexis or lexical knowledge as a more encompassing linguistic element than vocabulary. Lastly, the future researchers should investigate other potential variables that may positively affect lexical knowledge.

Scope and Limitations

The study specifically focused on the effect of morphological awareness on lexical knowledge which covers word networks such as polysemy, synonymy, ambiguity, and collocates (Caro, 2017). The respondents of the study were the ninety (90) Grade 7 learners from regular classes of a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato. The special classes were excluded in the selection process.

The intervention, however, was not a program; it was only 12-hour intervention with 6-hour in-person classes and 6-hour practice tasks. In the same way, the control group received the instruction in context clues with the same number of hours. Moreover, there were no substantial rationalization made in the conduct of practice tasks among the learners. Therefore, insufficient time for conduct of lessons and rationalization potentially caused the minimal increase in the scores of the respondents in the post-test.

Methods

This research study used a quasi- experimental pretest-posttest design to assess the effects of morphological awareness in lexical knowledge of the Grade 7 learners in a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato. According to Rogers and Revesz (2020), a quasi- experimental pretest-posttest design is appropriate when the researcher tests the effects of treatment on outcome variables. Through utilizing this design, the researcher was able to analyze explicitly the quantitative data from the lexical knowledge of the Grade 7 learners by measuring its levels, testing the difference between the pre-tests results of the two groups, their pre-test and posttest results, and their posttests results.

Respondents

The study's respondents were 90 learners from two sections of the Grade 7 classes of a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato, Philippines. The classes were purposively selected. The special sections were excluded from the selection. The 90 purposively selected learners were divided into control and experimental groups, with 45 learners each. The control group received 12-hour sessions in contextual clues, and the experimental group received the same 12-hour session in morphological awareness which was the treatment.

Instrument

To measure the learners' lexical knowledge level before and after the treatment (morphological awareness), the researcher adopted the instrument from John Read's Word Associates Tests (1998). Originally, the test had 40-word items with total of 160 points. The researcher has decided to divide it into two (2) sets of items—the first half was intended for the pre-test and the other half for the post-test with 80 points each.

Data Gathering Procedures

The researcher has obtained consent letters from the school division superintendent, school principal of the study's locale, and the parents of the minors. After granting the permission, he selected two regular classes from the Grade 7. The special classes were excluded from the deliberation of selection. The two selected classes, comprised of 45 learners each, and then placed as control and experimental groups using a random method.

To successfully conduct the intervention, the researcher designed a weekly learning plan for both instruction in context clues and morphological awareness. Upon the approval of the subject teacher of the English classes, Ms. Janice E. Del Mundo, the researcher then administered the pre-test to the groups in the beginning of the intervention. The learners also received the consent forms to be approved by their parents. They were also informed about the purpose and specific objectives of the study. Then, the researcher has conducted the interventions on the planned dates.

In administering the pre-test, the learners' scores were used to assess their level of lexical knowledge before implementing the treatment.

Moreover, these sets of pre-test scores were used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the control and experimental groups' levels of lexical knowledge and the normality of the distribution of data. Then after the intervention, the learners took the post-tests from which the scores were obtained for t- test.

Intervention Design for Control Group

The vocabulary instruction delivered for the control group was the use of context clues. This is a familiar strategy for any learners to get information around the unfamiliar word they come across (Caro, et.al., 2004; Wilson, 2013). The intervention was not a program; but rather, a strategy for instruction. Thus, the intervention has run for two weeks. Each week, the researcher met the control group for four (3) sessions—with one (1) hour per session. Handouts with lessons and practice tests which were designed for 6-hours were also provided. The intervention had a total number of 12 hours.

Intervention Design for Experimental Group

The intervention's activities were sourced from Green and Wolter's (2009) Morphological Awareness Intervention:

Techniques for Promoting Language and Literacy Success. The researcher adapted the activities and demonstrations from the source in designing the lessons. The intervention has run for two weeks. Each week, the researcher met the control group for four (3) sessions—with one (1) hour per session. Handouts with lessons and practice tests were also provided which were designed for 6-hours. The intervention had a total number of 12 hours.

To ensure the quality of the intervention given to the learners, the researcher considered the time element in their implementation. He met the group of learners one hour after the other.

At the end of the intervention, a parallel test was administered to the controlled and experimental groups. The results were used to assess the learners' lexical knowledge level after the

12-hour intervention. Further, the post-test scores of each group were then compared with its pre- test scores to see whether there was any significant change after the implementation of the intervention; and the post-test scores of the two groups was also compared to see whether there was a significant difference between the performance of controlled and experimental groups.

Data Analysis

The study used the following statistical tools in analyzing the gathered data:

Independent Samples T-test in comparing the means of two groups in a study, a statistical test named t-test is fit to use. To determine the significant difference between the test scores of controlled and experimental groups of Grade 7 learners in lexical knowledge, the researcher employed independent samples t-test.

Dependent Samples T-test in determining the significant difference between the test scores of each group of Grade 7 learners in lexical knowledge before and after the intervention in morphological awareness, the researcher used a two-sample t-test. All statistical tests were done at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The main result of the study indicated that morphological awareness was effective in improving the lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners. The learners who had the study treatment performed better than the learners in control group. The result and discussion below showed the findings of the specific aims of the study:

The Level of Lexical Knowledge of Grade 7 Learners before the Intervention

This section determined the level of lexical knowledge of Grade 7 learners before the conduct of the intervention. It first determined the number of learners in the different score ranges using frequency and percentage; then it determined the mean score of all learners in the study using average.

Table 1

Level of Lexical Knowledge of Grade 7 Learners in Pre-test

Score Range	Descriptions	F	%
65-80	Excellent	0	0
49-64	Very Satisfactory	32	35.56%
33-48	Satisfactory	58	64.44%
17-32	Fairly Satisfactory	0	0
1-16	Poor	0	0
Overall		90	100%
Mean Score		46.76	Satisfactory

The results show that most of the Grade 11 learners of the study from both control and experimental groups performed "satisfactorily" in the pre-test with a frequency of 58 with scores ranging from 33– 48 having a percentage of 64.44%. It implied that most learners had a satisfactory lexical knowledge prior to the implementation of the intervention. On the other hand, 32 of the learners performed "very satisfactorily", with scores ranging from 49–64, which had a percentage of 35.56%. It implied that the rest of them had a quite high level of lexical knowledge.

In most action researchers such as Hidayat (2016), Grade 7 learners' vocabulary level was poor. Such findings could support the study's results. In the early level of high school years of the learners, they have a poor grasp of word knowledge which is a vitally fundamental component of reading. As they reach the next grade level, learners have not yet attained the previous level of achievement expected of them. Because reading comprehension correlates to vocabulary (Cain, 2014), it indicated that learners' reading comprehension was affected by poor vocabulary (San Juan, 2019). It could be traced from different assessments. One popular assessment was the Program for International Student Assessment that resulted in Filipino learners being placed last among the 79 participating countries in 2018. It is to note that one of the targets of the assessment was the reading comprehension alongside Mathematics and Science.

As vocabulary was distinguished from lexis, Caro, K. & Rosado, N. (2017) stated that most schools do not emphasize developing lexis among learners. It could be traced that the introduction of lexis was late, thus, resulting in a poor grasp of learners toward its concept. The theories on word learning stated that children struggle in learning polysemous words (Srinivasan, 2021), as one element of lexis. The theories themselves is studied as a problem in which young individuals learn only a single meaning for a new word. Perhaps, this notion is a misconception among language learning classrooms that should be clarified by language teachers themselves. Most of the attention of the educators are on vocabulary alone, which is why children are already feeling satisfied when they are able to give a single meaning to a word. However, polysemy should be introduced, or if it already is, then be taught in the classrooms to raise learners' awareness on different but related meanings of a particular word (Falcum, 2015).

Regarding collocations, according to Du's (2021) collocation use among 174,743 EFL learners in Englishtown, an online English language school, only advanced learners tend to use them which comprised semantically complicated noun elements. These learners have high proficiency level of knowledge on the use of collocates in writing tasks. It only implied that average learners could hardly write with complex sentences with collocations in their content. One of the reasons for this is the learning burden different collocations have in relation to their congruency, or the literal translation equivalent of the word (Peters, 2016). This investigation of Peters (2016) showed that incongruent collocations and the pattern of verb+noun type collocations make it more difficult to acquire. This is already an implication to many concerned educators, especially,

English teachers to teach the concept of collocation in writing tasks. Further, this is an indicator that an intervention or a program should be planned and designed to help on the matter.

In summary, the Grade 11 learners of the study had a fairly satisfactory performance, with a mean score of 46.76% before the intervention. The students had an average level of lexical knowledge, assuming that they were not aware of the other lexical elements of the words. Further, the researcher assessed the gathered data from the pre-test scores of Grade 7 learners by looking closely at the individual performance of the groups, controlled and experimental groups. The table below showed the comparison of the scores of the two groups.

Table 2

Independent Samples T-Test for Pretest of Control and Experimental Group

	t	df	p
Pre-test	1.713	88	0.090

Note. Students' t-test.

The results show as presented in the table that the t-test for the pre-test of control and experimental groups had a p-value of 0.090 which was greater than the alpha value of 0.05. In other words, there was no significant difference between the control and experimental groups before or in the beginning of the research. The groups' responses were proven to be proportional. It was helpful because the samples in the two groups were randomly assigned—a method that is supposedly applied at the beginning of the intervention. It was necessary to gain the most desired result of the experiment in the process.

Moreover, a test of normality was made by the researcher. It was important to ensure that

The Difference between Pre-Tests Results of Control and Experimental Groups

After measuring the level of lexical knowledge of the Grade 7 respondents of the study, the researcher also performed a test of difference to compare the data gathered from two groups. According to Bevans (2020), in comparing the means of two groups in a study, a statistical test named t-test is fit to use. Thus, the researcher used an independent samples t-test. Also, the test was used to determine whether the intervention the researcher intended to execute had an effect on the samples as the pre-test scores would then be used to compare with the post-test.

the data were formed normally in the curve. The test, therefore, showed that the scores or data of both groups from controlled and experimental groups were normally distributed. It exhibited that the tested variable could be predicted and studied with high accuracy.

The Difference between Pre-Test and Post- Test of Control Group

This section determined the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of Grade 7 learners from the control group in lexical knowledge using the paired samples t-test.

Table 3

Paired Samples T-Test for Control Group

		t	df	p
Pre-test	- Posttest	3.388	44	0.001

Note. Students' t-test.

The researcher calculated the mean scores of the post-test of learners in the control group without the intervention on morphological awareness. From a satisfactory performance in the beginning of the intervention with the mean score of 47.51, the learners stayed at the same level with the mean score of 44.78 at the end of the 12-hour intervention. The figures clearly showed that there was a slight decrease in the performance of the learners who did not have the treatment. It also attested that the intervention made among the learners in the control group did not make an improvement in their level of lexical knowledge. However, their vocabulary knowledge in the series of practice tests provided in the worksheet was exemplary.

Moreover, the result show that the paired samples t-test for the pre-test and post- test of the control group had a p-value of 0.001. It implied that the Grade 7 learners' performance in the pre-test and post-test had a significant difference since it was less than the alpha value 0.05. Since an instruction on vocabulary has been delivered to the learners, the researcher found that there was a change in their performance, though, their level stayed at the satisfactory bracket after the intervention. In fact, the group had a 6-hour in-person instruction on wide reading practices, using context clues in unlocking words. The researcher provided three short reading passages for them to read from which the researcher let them read a material repeatedly. To Rodriguez (2018), when children repeat books they read, and review what they read over and over again, they will most likely remember information. Not only retaining information could it cause but also enlarge vocabulary and word recognition (Corneal, n.d.).

With these related journals reviewed, the researcher believed that such repetitions in reading were a part of the traditional vocabulary instruction. Also, the researcher ascertained that the texts were inclined to the learners' grade level. Additionally, the respondents learned how to use clues from the context whenever they encounter unfamiliar words. There were also handouts with practice tests provided to the control group. They consisted with item tests that have unfamiliar words in contexts and item tests that require their explanation on defining the terms using context clues. To concretely observe whether they could define the words, the learners were tasked to define the words on their own based on how they understand them in the context and they explained it in the class. In the process, the researcher has been collating the definitions and corrected them based on true definitions as suggested in the dictionary. As what the concept of traditional suggests, the method was through lecture in which direct instruction was used.

Most of the results of related studies on improving vocabulary among learners showed an increase in their scores after an intervention. For instance, Hunt and Feng's (2016) Direct Vocabulary Instruction has been proven effective in improving learners' word gain, so as teachers' professional development in vocabulary instructional strategies. It aimed at examining the vocabulary acquisition of English learners in primary school in Washington, D. C. Alongside was its long-term goal for teachers who were trained to use different strategies to teach vocabulary, including read aloud and direct vocabulary instruction. Indeed, provision of formal training to English teachers are necessary to make them confident in teaching vocabulary. It is not only intrinsic factors that affect learners' performance in reading and small vocabulary size, but also extrinsic such as materials (Nordlund and Norberg, 2020) and teachers' efficiency (McLeod, et. al. 2019).

Another strategy for improving vocabulary is the SAVI method (Endayani, 2011), which stands for somatic, auditory, visual, and intellectual senses. In his study, it was tested to profoundly affect learning among Grade 4 pupils in terms of vocabulary. As what the words suggest in its name, learners in this experience are engaged in physical activities, social interaction, listening and watching, thinking, and analyzing respectively. Opposite to direct vocabulary instruction, it is more child- centered approach, and many researchers also used it as intervention to learning experiences. To Septiyana (2017), this method is effective for improving writing skills because one element that indicates success among learners is vocabulary enhancement. Much more to that, she added that it is good for helping learners facilitate their

own critical thinking in order to produce a well-written text. However, without appropriate facilitation on the end of the teachers using SAVI, it could be as ordinary as classroom instructions. It should be noted that it is with much effort that SAVI must work well. Morrison (2012) supported that it is with a teacher's enthusiasm, content expertise, rapport with the learners with a caring attitude that would carry the instruction successfully in the process.

The multisensory instruction of D'Alesio in 2007 also enhanced learners' acquisition of the meaning of words. Related to SAVI, it is one that engaged learners' multiple senses in learning. In his study, with more senses engaged in learning, the learners perform well. A more recent experiment on the effectiveness of multisensory instruction to reading was conducted by Syahputri (2019). The high school learners in Indonesia were proven to have an improved reading achievement when they were taught with multisensory.

However, with all the positive impact of different methods in teaching vocabulary above, no literature was found that they could also be as effective in lexical knowledge. Therefore, the calculation of the respondents' scores in control group revealed that from the mean score of 47.51 of the learners' pre-test scores, it dropped to the mean score of 44.78. It implied that the learners' performance in the post-test, without receiving the treatment in this research, stayed at the satisfactory level. It could be for the reason that the instrument used for assessing lexical knowledge did not provide contexts to unlock the words, unlike the manner learners used to do during the instruction in context clues. With exposure to several reading materials to train themselves in unlocking unfamiliar words, learners also manifested

indifference in the practical activities during the classes. This was also evident in the study of Ilter (2019) when sixth-grade learners from middle school, who received wide reading strategy, performed lower than those trained to use context clues to infer meanings. It only supported the result that some strategies' effects which teachers use in classroom instruction, particularly teaching vocabulary and reading have started to diminish.

In summary, this stagnant level of lexical knowledge among the learners in control group without receiving the researcher's treatment showed that there could be a more effective instruction to teach lexical knowledge. The context clues strategy had its own name in every corner of academic books; however, it particularly helped in developing vocabulary and consequently, comprehension. However, with the aim to develop lexis, such strategy could have its own limitations. Because of the result of t-test, it could also be perceived that there should be modification in ways how teachers teach, and learners learn vocabulary and lexis. It is time to go away from the traditional way of learning of any subjects. Plus, in today's modern living, schools should adopt instructional strategies that are honing too the 21st century skills of the learners. The generations today are getting more adaptive to changes and their ways are more kinesthetic than ever.

The Difference between Pre-Test and Post-Test Results of Experimental Group

This section determined the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of Grade 7 learners from the experimental group in lexical knowledge using the paired samples t-test.

Table 4

Paired Samples T-Test for Experimental Group

			t	df	p
Pre-test	-	Posttest	-7.952	44	< .001

Note. Students' t-test.

The researcher calculated the mean scores of the level of lexical knowledge of learners in the experimental group after the morphological awareness. From the mean score of 46 which was interpreted as satisfactory, the learners improved at the mean score of 49.96 with interpretation of very satisfactory. The figures clearly showed that there was an increase in the level of lexical knowledge of learners in the experimental group after the morphological awareness. It also attested that the treatment was effective in developing lexical knowledge among Grade 7 learners in KNCHS. Moreover, the result in the table showed that the paired samples t-test of experimental group had a p-value of <0.001. In other words, it implied that the Grade 7 learners' performance in the pre-test and post- test had a significant difference since it was less than the 0.05 alpha value.

Several researchers attested that morphological awareness is a paramount contributor to learning the meanings of words but very few on lexis. In classical experimental research of Wysocki and Jenkins (1987), learners in Grades 5, 6, and 8 successfully comprehended complex words in their first language as they used knowledge of affixes. These learners were divided into control and treatment groups and the latter, who received instruction on morphology to learn units of words, achieved better results than the control group. Years later, the same objective was aimed at by the research of Bertram, Laine, and Virkkla in 2000. Children in Finnish elementary schools were able to understand newly formed words through conscious analysis of their affixes. With the help of their awareness on the different functions of suffixes being attached to the word element, they could understand the meaning of those words and therefore, use them in constructing sentences.

A more recent study on vocabulary improvement was conducted by Khodadoust et al. in 2013. The study has proven the correlation existing between morphological awareness and vocabulary among Iranian English learners in undergraduate schools. The young adult learners have shown exemplary performance in the test that followed their morphological awareness assessment. The study further emphasized the need to include morphological analysis in classroom tasks when learning English. According to Kirby and Bowers (2017), morphology was being the one linguistic feature that connects directly to orthographic patterns, pronunciation, and meanings of words. In their research Morphological Instruction and Literacy, they concluded that better morphological awareness acquired through explicit method of instructional delivery can be expected to enhance grapheme-phoneme and vocabulary knowledge. The study further included the notion that morphology should be integrated within the vocabulary instruction. They highly recommended that teachers use the concepts of affixes and their respective meanings in teaching vocabulary. It is an effective strategy for understanding connection among words based on their shared meaningful morphemes.

Not only does morphological awareness improve English learners' vocabulary but also reading comprehension. Mimran and Nevet (2022) has examined that morphology can assist the decoding process among preschoolers in Israel. The experiment has seen that even at the early age, morphological awareness can contribute to reading accuracy and reading fluency. In the study of Kotzer, et. al. (2021), Morphological Awareness Predicts Reading Comprehension in Adults, morphological awareness is an important factor for adults' reading achievement. Although it was not as effective as to children, the study found out that morphology works for them too. To second language Chinese adult learners, grapho- morphological knowledge had a significant positive impact on the radical levels on reading comprehension (Chen, et. al., 2021). To explain further, the findings, based on correlational and path analyses, interpreted that those Chinese adult learners' early character-level and radical-level grapho-morphological knowledge significantly predicted later reading comprehension.

These studies support the findings of the research that morphological has a very high tendency to help learners improve their vocabulary and reading. However, no research yet studied its effect on lexical knowledge, particularly, the polysemy, synonymy, and collocates of the word. Thus, the researcher has filled this

gap by assessing the level of achievement of Grade 7 learners on lexis using John Read's Words Association Test (1998). To reiterate, the respondents have improved their lexical knowledge after the intervention on morphological awareness.

The Difference between Post-Test Results of Control and Experimental Groups

This section determined the significant difference between the post-test scores of Grade 7 learners from the control and experimental groups using the independent samples t-test.

Table 5

Independent Samples T-Test for Posttest of Control and Experimental Group

	t	df	p
Posttest	-5.517	88	< .001

Note. Student's t-test.

The results show that the t-test for the post-test of control and experimental groups had a p-value of <0.001. It implied that there was a significant difference between the two groups after the intervention. This testified that the experimental group that received the treatment performed better than the control group. In most experiments, studying the level of achievement of students in vocabulary and reading comprehension tests, a significant difference between the performance of the control and experimental groups was evident, indicating that the treatment group has better post-test scores than the control group. For example, Khodadoust et al. (2013) provided a piece of evidence that learners who were trained to use their knowledge of word units performed better in vocabulary tests than learners in the control group. This could also be the reason why several researchers made recommendations about using instructions on morphology to improve not only vocabulary but also literacy development such as phonology, orthography, word meaning, spelling, and reading comprehension, though, their research was already outdated.

In fact, there was a growing issue on the educational value of morphological awareness. To clarify this, Carlisle (2011) made an integrative review on effects of instruction in morphological awareness on literacy development, particularly, phonology, orthography, and word meaning. She analyzed the findings of 16 studies on related topic that met the selection criteria. These findings were organized around the purpose of investigating the effect of instruction in morphological awareness on key components of literacy. Result of the review indicated that the instruction could contribute to those three literacy skills most especially when learners are able to make sense with morphemic structures, and meanings of affixes. This supported the result of this study regarding the role of morphological awareness.

Another concern about the educational value of morphology was whether its findings on research could be translated to teacher's practice. The study of Hurry, et. al. (2007) exactly addressed it by exploring teachers' knowledge about morphemes as indicator in spelling and seeking to transform their teaching practice. The result showed the teachers' knowledge increased and their practice improved. In turn, the pupils gained significant improvement too in spelling. The most notable conclusion in this study was that research on instruction in morphological awareness can be turned into practice, yet, it also posed some difficulties such as the sufficiency of policy documentation and teacher's professional development. On such issue of teacher's professional development, there was also an assumption that many teachers are unfamiliar with morphology. Carlisle (2011) added that word study, focusing on form and meaning, should be incorporated to reading programs in elementary. This recommendation as well should be explored.

The result of this study further proved that the lecture, demonstration, and activities designed for teaching morphological awareness were proven effective to improve the learners' lexical knowledge. This quasi- experimental research also emphasized that the study's dependent variable was different from other related studies. While their experimental studies showed a significant improvement in learners' vocabulary size, this research stretched vocabulary size by including its other associates than meaning— polysemy, synonymy, and collocates.

Since the studies being reviewed in this section to discuss the results of this quasi- experimental research findings were already outdated, the researcher has shown that this undertaking was essential to create a recent

and updated study about the effectiveness of morphological awareness instruction on improving literacy skills such as lexical knowledge.

Conclusions

The learners scored satisfactorily in the beginning of the intervention. The data were normally distributed at the start of the conduct of the study.

The learners' scores in pre-test indicated that there was no significant difference in the lexical knowledge between control and experimental groups in the beginning of the study.

After the respective interventions were given to the two groups, the control group, who received the instruction on context clues, stayed at satisfactory level of lexical knowledge in their post-test mean.

On the other hand, the experimental group, who received intervention on morphological awareness, improved their level of lexical knowledge in their post-test mean.

Lastly, the learners' scores in post- test indicated that there was a significant difference in the lexical knowledge between control and experimental groups in the beginning of the study. The learners who had the study treatment performed better than the learners in the control group.

The researcher, therefore, concluded that the morphological awareness was an effective intervention on lexical knowledge of Grade 7

learners in a government high school in City of Koronadal, South Cotabato.

Implications

Overall, the findings of the study have implications for instructional decisions and practices, language learning, and future research related to this.

The findings could impact the decision-making process of the administrators, department and academic heads, and language experts in considering morphological analysis as a new and efficient language teaching technique in improving lexical knowledge of learners. In the same way, they may also consider lexis as an essential linguistic element other than vocabulary in targeting the literacy success of the learners.

Moreover, the findings could inform the learners of the paramount role of morphological awareness and lexical knowledge in their language abilities.

Lastly, the findings could update the trends in language issues and problems; therefore, researchers should further investigate on other areas of language concerns which may not have sufficient breakthroughs yet.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made and proposed based on the findings of the study:

As teachers assume many significant roles in the classroom, they should consider designing their language learning instruction based on empirical findings of research, such as the effectiveness of morphological awareness on lexical knowledge of learners. Further, in aim to improve learners' vocabulary and lexical knowledge, teachers should consider using morphology.

Moreover, since the related studies being reviewed in this quasi-experiment were outdated, further attempts to undertake the same or related paper investigating morphological awareness as instruction to improve lexical knowledge are recommended. In addition, other literacy skills than lexical knowledge could also be the subject for investigation such as reading comprehension.

Teachers' implementation of morphological instruction in language classrooms would be successful with support from school administrations. Thus, it is further recommended that administrators should consider reviewing the effective utilization of morphology in teaching literacy skills.

Additionally, the use of traditional vocabulary instruction could not work effectively in these times; thus, it is also being recommended in this paper that new strategies be studied and utilized in classroom instruction, such as morphological awareness.

Parents are the first teachers of children. It is then being recommended that children be exposed in English words at home, at least as a target language. Children with much exposure to English at early point are most likely successful in keeping meanings of words as they grow.

Lastly, research on lexis could be an interesting subject of investigation. Upon reviewing the related literature and studies, there were a lot of studies on vocabulary topics but few on lexis. The demarcation between the terms should be further clarified and investigated through literature review and experimental studies.

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