CHILDES-Driven Materials for Teaching
English Derivational Morphology to EFL Learners

Jongsup JUN
Department of Linguistics and Cognitive Science
Hankuk University of Foreign Studies
Seoul, Korea
jongsupjun@korea.com

Previous studies have shown that morphological awareness is crucial for vocabulary development (Freyd & Baron, 1982; Anglin, 1993), and that both native English-speaking students and EFL learners benefit a lot in vocabulary building by learning rules of derivational morphology (Nagy *et al.*, 2006; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2008). However, it is not clear which derivational morphemes students should learn first prior to others.

The goal of this study is to present data-driven learning materials for teaching English derivational morphology to EFL students. A central assumption of the study is that EFL learning should resemble the general process of the first language acquisition. Therefore, the best learning materials for EFL teaching can be obtained from a large database of children's first language development.

We used a million-word corpus obtained from the CHILDES database (MacWhinney & Snow, 1985). In particular, we combined the HSLLD (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001) and the Carterette and Jones (Carterette & Jones, 1974) databases, since they included large samples from various age groups. By combining the two databases, we came to have balanced numbers of children at all age groups from 3-9 that total up to 469 individuals.

We extracted 7,234 derived words that were instances of 704 derivative types from the corpus. Surprisingly, English-speaking children at early ages used more derivative types than had been reported in the literature (cf. Clark, 1993, 2003). Among three-year-old children's derived words, we found 11 prefixes, i.e. *i(n/m/l)–*, *tele–*, *under–*, *tri–*, *out–*, *un–*, *pre–*, *super–*, *mis–*, *mid–*, *non–*, and 19 suffixes, i.e. *–(e/o/a)r*, *–y*, *–ie*, *–ly*, *–(a)(t)ion*, *–ful*, *–(i)(a)n*, *–ish*, *–ment*, *–ness*, *–ic*, *–(a/i)ble*, *–(a/e)ry*, *–(a/e)nt*, *–ance/ence*, *–en*, *–some*, *–ese*, *–let*, in such words as *actually*, *allegiance*, *awesome*, *baker*, *beautiful*, *birdie*, *blacken*, *blueish*, *bracelet*, *Chinese*, *creamy*, *daily*, *department*, *different*, *goodness*, *indigestion*, *indivisible*, *Italian*, *mechanic*, *midnight*, *mistake*, *nonsense*, *outside*, *pastry*, *preschool*, *superman*, *Swish*, *telephone*, *triangle*, *underwear*, and *undone*.

Children use more derivational affixes in older groups. At age 4, five more prefixes, i.e. *re–*, *sub–*, *micro–*, *dis–*, *trans–*, and 10 more suffixes, i.e. *–al*, *–en* (adjectival), *–ist*, *–ous*, *–ity*, *–ine*, *–(a/e/an/en)cy*, *–less*, *–hood*, *–age*, appear in the transcripts. At age 5, one prefix *over–* and six suffixes, i.e. *–(s)ion*, *–ess*, *–ize*, *–ant* (noun), *–al* (noun), *–ster*, are added. At age 6, three prefixes, i.e. *uni–*, *mono–*, *fore–*, and one suffix *–ical* are added. At age 7, two more suffixes *–ship* and *–(t)ive* appear. At age 8, the prefix *inter–* and the suffix *–(i)fy* appear; and at age 9, three more prefixes, i.e. *auto–*, *bi–*, *hypo–*, are found in the transcripts.

The list of affixes and derived words extracted from the CHILDES database is an important source for language-acquisition-based English teaching. This is in contrast with

Bauer & Nation's (1993) linguistic hierarchy of affixes that has been adopted in many pedagogical studies of vocabulary teaching. We will compare the acquisitional approach with the linguistic approach in the paper.

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