



Word formation literacy assessment of advanced Persian learners of Alzahra University: A case study of derivational affixes

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1. Introduction

Knowledge of word and its building is of a great importance for language production either from a derivational or an inflectional point of view. The ability to use an appropriate form of a word in a specific grammatical context is essential for developing the language efficiently. Otherwise, language learners may only use the forms of the words which are already known to them or replace them with other grammatically appropriate words. Knowing a word is knowing affixes along with the stem which can be also used in other words. Despite the importance of inflectional affixes, different studies indicate great importance for derivational knowledge of words in language processing. So, this research concentrates on Persian derivative words and studies Persian learners' word formation literacy; including both suffixes and prefixes. Considering this, the main question of this study is to what extent the derivational morphemes are represented in the learners' written documents, using the "*general Persian Parsa3* course book".

2. Materials and methods

For the aim of this article, data is collected from the students' compositions and also *general Persian Parsa 3* course book. So, 105 compositions of advanced Persian learners, along with 20 units of the selected course book were studied and the derived words were extracted and separately categorized. In each group, the derived words were counted base on type and not token. Data was both quantitatively and descriptively analyzed.

To report data descriptively, the number of the derived words base on the morphemes used in them was counted in both students' written documents and the course book. In quantitative analysis, and in order to compare the average of derived morphemes used by students and those exists in the course book, the one-sample T-test was applied. The results based on morpheme inferential analysis might indicate that there is a direct relation between morpheme exposure and applying them by

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Persian learners. In other words, the number of derivative words used in students' writings is to some extent the representation of their confrontation with derivative words in the book which they have been taught either; directly or indirectly.

3. Results and discussion

The results showed that among all morphemes, two morphemes «-ی / -گی» and «-ه» are highly used in students' writings and also in their course book. The least used morphemes with the application of less than %1 in Persian learners' writings are the prefixes «-ار»، «-بان»، «-چه»، «-کار»، «-گار»، «-در-» و «-وا-»، «-پاد-»، «-باز-»، «-بلا-» and the suffixes «-دار»، «-گر»، «-مان»، «-وار»، «-یار»، «-آن / -ایان»، «-ال»، «-ال-»، «-سیر»، «-گان»، «-ناک» و «-واره». In their course book, however, the frequency of prefixes «-ار»، «-بان»، «-چه»، «-کار»، «-گار»، «-در-» و «-وا-»، «-پاد-»، «-بلا-»، «-باز-» and the suffixes such as «-گان»، «-ین-»، «-بان-»، «-چه-»، «-کار-»، «-دار-»، «-مان-»، «-وار-»، «-ال-»، «-سیر-»، «-گان-»، «-ین-»، «-بان-»، «-چه-»، «-کار-»، «-دار-»، «-مان-»، «-وار-»، «-ال-»، «-سیر-»، «-گان-» was less than %1. The prefix «-ار» and the suffixes «-گان»، «-ین-»، «-بان-»، «-چه-»، «-کار-»، «-دار-»، «-مان-»، «-وار-»، «-ال-»، «-سیر-» were not used in students' writings. Among these affixes, the prefix «-ک-» is considered one of the most frequent Persian prefixes which is attached to the nouns and adjectives and makes nouns with different roles and meanings.

Inferential analysis also showed the comparison of the average usage of the derivative morphemes in students' written documents and their course book. According to this analysis, prefix «-هم» and the suffixes «-ی / -گی»، «-ه»، «-ان»، «-یت» «-ش» و «-انه» و «-مند» have the higher average usage in students' writings compared to their course book. However, looking at descriptive statistics showed the prefixes «-ی / -گی» have high equal usage in both sets of data. In contrast, there are morphemes such as «-ان / -ایان» و «-ار» and «-باز» with less average usage in students' writings in comparison to their course book. Looking at charts 7 and 8, it is indicated that most of Persian morphemes are equally used in both students' written documents and their course book. As a result, the average usage difference of them is not statistically meaningful. Therefore, according to referential analysis of the data, it is concluded that there could be a direct relation between Morpheme exposure and the amount of their usage and their representation in Persian learners' writings.

Another point is that there are morphemes including «-ار»، «-ان»، «-فرا-»، «-ک-» used in the course book, but not observed in students' writings. These morphemes are excluded from statistical investigations.

A close look at descriptive charts 1 and 2 and comparing the prefixes and suffixes with high usage in students' writings will indicate that they have more tendency to use derivational suffixes in comparison to prefixes. As an example, the highest usage among suffixes is about %42 related to suffix «-ی / -گی» while the highest usage among prefixes is about %2 related to the prefix «-هم».

It is also showed that there is more tendency to use derivational suffixes in comparison to prefixes. Derivative words were mostly related to the categories of adjective and noun respectively.

4. Conclusion

The results are in line with processability theory which emphasizes on a direct relation between the amount of confrontation with input (including direct and indirect teaching) and the amount of students' learning. Data also show learners' tendency to use derivational suffixes more than prefixes. This research along with many other studies in the field of learning derivational morphemes, can be influential in determining learning sequence of these morphemes in Persian for the aim of teaching and developing learning materials.

Keywords: derivational morphemes, derivative words, exposure, input processing, second language learning