

**Ways of Creating Prefixes and Suffixes and Foreign Language Teaching**

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**Abstract**

The aim of this paper is to emphasize the issue of prefixes and suffixes in the area of foreign language learning and teaching. In this respect, how they are formed is focused on initially. Later, their types are given place. After this, prefixes and suffixes are taken separately with examples. At this step, tables are used to make it easy for learners in understanding the meaning, function and usage of prefixes and suffixes. Then, ways of presenting prefixes and suffixes to learners is discussed, and it is followed by problems faced by Turkish learners in learning them. Ways of eliminating these problems is presented, as well. In the conclusion part, some ideas of the writer on the subject matter as final remarks are clarified briefly.

**Key Words:** Prefix, suffix, morphology

**Özet**

Bu makale yabancı dil eğitimi ve öğretiminde önekler ve sonekler konusunu vurgulamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu anlamda, ilk başta bu eklerin nasıl oluşturulduğu üzerinde durulmuştur. Daha sonra, bunların çeşitleri ele alınmıştır. Burada, önekler ve sonekler örneklerle açıklanmıştır. Öneklerin ve soneklerin anlamlarının, görevlerinin ve kullanımlarının daha anlaşılır olması için tablolar kullanılmıştır. Daha sonra ön ve soneklerin öğrencilere sunumu konusu ele alınmıştır. Bu bölüm, Türk öğrencilerin konuyu anlamada karşılaşılabilecekleri sorunlar ve bunların çözümlerine yönelik açıklamalar ile devam etmiştir. Sonuç bölümünde ise yazar belirtmek istediği son sözlere kısaca yer vermiş ve çalışmasını sona erdirmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Önek, sonek, şekilbilim

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

As is known learning a foreign language is not an easy skill, because it is a combination of many topics. These topics include phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and many other components. That is why, when learning a language, a learner must consider all of these components. Perhaps one of the most important of these all is morphology, in particular prefixes and suffixes. So, the writer mainly will dwell on this concern.

Needless to say, morphological level of a language constitutes a significant part in the structure of a language. Prefixes and suffixes should be taken in the same respect as well. The reason is that they have a very big area of usage in English Language. Learners use them widely, and sometimes they may be misused. The aim of this study at first is to clarify the topic of prefixes and suffixes. Later prefixes and suffixes will be handled separately. In the second part of this study, ways of presenting prefixes and suffixes to learners will be dwelt on. In this part some coursebook analysis will be made. This will help the readers to understand the topic better through examples and actual uses. The third part of this study aims to illuminate the readers about the problems faced by learners in learning prefixes and suffixes. The reasons of these problems and ways of eliminating them will also be stated. This part can be very useful for English Language teachers whose learners need some treatment about wrong uses of prefixes and suffixes. At the end will come the last part which will be the conclusion of the study.

To sum up, any language used on the Earth has some components, and morphology is only one of these components. In this morphological side of English Language, prefixes and suffixes have an important role. The reason is that prefixes and suffixes are used widely in many places including word-building mechanisms. They should be handled with care. If they are used carefully they can ease the communication by decoding ideas more effectively and in various forms; however, if used in wrong forms, they may cause misunderstandings or different meanings that the producer of an utterance or the writer of a sentence does not want to mean. So, they should be used carefully, and their teaching in foreign language teaching field must be emphasized. Only in this way non-native speakers of English can use them correctly. Since this is a big problem, this paper will try to solve it, at least will give way to the understanding of the topic prefixes and suffixes and their place in English Language.

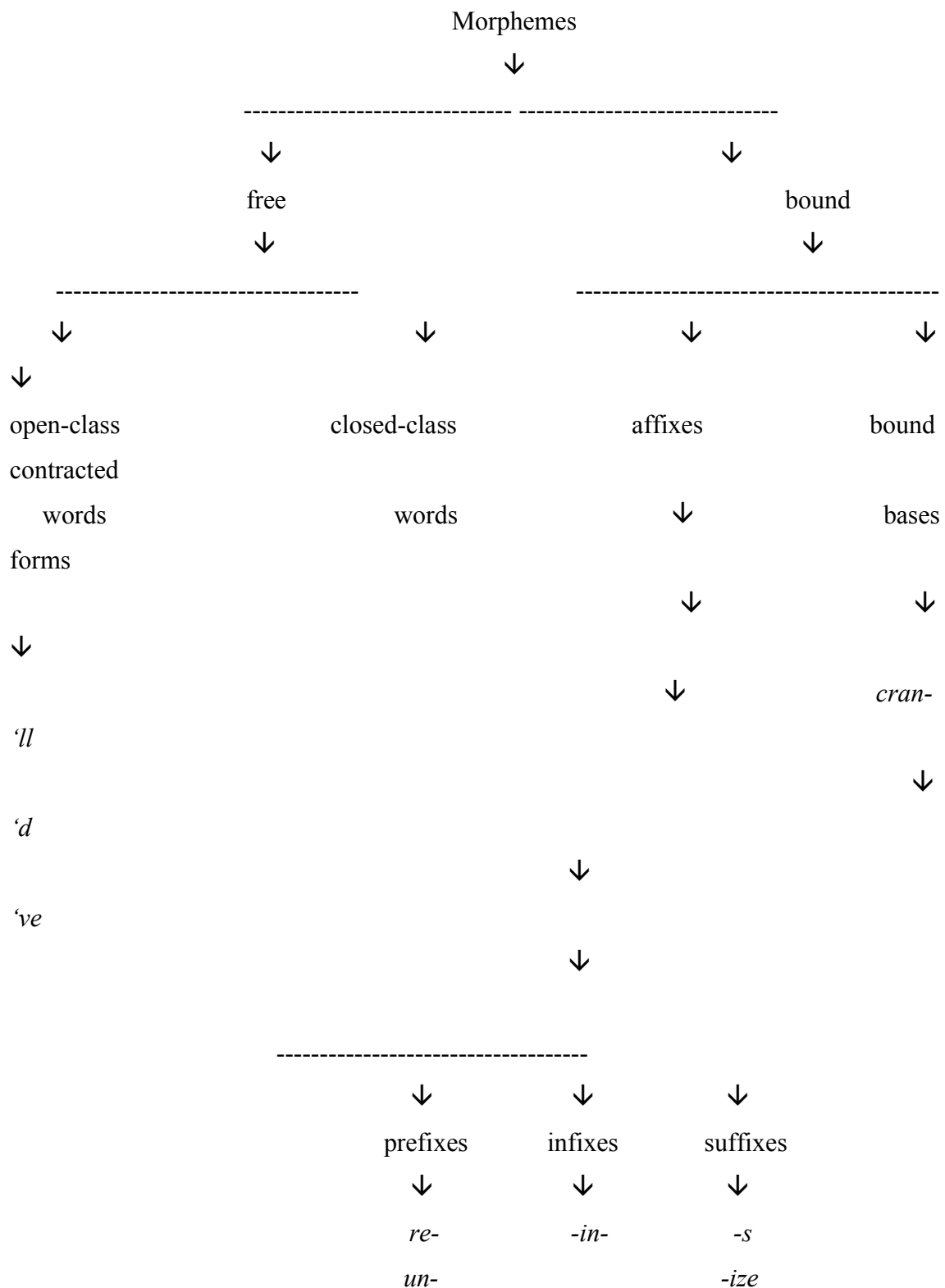
## 2.0 PREFIXES, SUFFIXES AND THEIR TYPES

In this work the terms of prefix and suffix will be used many times, but what is a prefix, what is a suffix? In order to go deeper into details, these terms have to be clarified at the very beginning. That is why, they must be explained before some other concerns. In this part of this study the writer will concentrate on this issue.

According to Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, David Crystal defines prefix as “A term used in morphology referring to an affix which is added initially to a root or stem.” (1991: 274). Another definition of prefix is like this: “One or two syllable additions at the beginning of a word that changes its meaning but do not change its part of speech.” (Maclin, 1992: 387). Katamba defines prefix similarly: “A prefix is an affix attached before a root or a stem or a base like *re-*, *un-* and *in-*.” (1993: 44). From all these said what is understood is that the term prefix is related to morphology, and it is a kind of affix. It comes before a root, a stem or a base and does not change the part of speech of that word. It is also a kind of bound morpheme, that is to say, it cannot be used in a sentence separately. It has to be used with a free morpheme.

After understanding what a prefix is, next comes suffix. Again according to Crystal, a suffix is “a term used in morphology referring to an affix which is added following a root or stem” (1991: 336). Maclin’s definition for suffix is “a suffix is an ending added to a word, which usually changes the part of speech of the word and may also change the meaning of the word.” (1992: 380). In addition to these explanations, Katamba defines suffix like this: “A suffix is an affix attached after a root or a stem or a base like *-ly*, *-er*, *-ist*, *-s*, *-ing* and *-ed*.” (1993: 44). What is understood from these all is that a suffix is a term related to morphology. It comes after a root, a stem or a base. It can change the part of speech of the word that it is attached to. So, the topic of prefixes and suffixes are understood better after learning the differences between them.

Considering all these explanations and placing prefixes and suffixes in morphology, they can be shown on a diagram to clarify their place. The following diagram shows the place of prefixes and suffixes in English Language. A detailed study of this diagram may explain more than words, that is why it worths attention. Here is the diagram:



The above given figure is the summary of morphemes in English except Bonto Igorot infix *-in-*. All the others are English.

After these explanations, now it is time to give some example to prefixes and suffixes. In this way they can be understood better in their forms. These all will be explained in 2.1 and 2.2.

## 2.1 Some Prefixes

There are many prefixes in English Language. This is mostly because of the borrowed words from many other languages. Prefixes have many uses, and they are in different structures. This also depends on the effects of other languages on English. In order to understand the meaning and use of a prefix, it should be examined with its meaning and related examples. Here is a list of some English prefixes with their meanings and some examples.

Prefix	Meaning	Example(s)
a-	not	atypical
Anglo-	English	Anglo-German relations
ante-	before	antenatal (before birth)
anti	against	anti-European, antisocial
auto-	self	autobiography
bi-	two	bicycle, bilingual, bimonthly
cent-, centi-	hundred	centenary, centimeter
circum-	around	to circumnavigate (to sail around)
co-	together	copilot, to coexist, cooperate
con-	with, together	context
contra-	against, opposite	to contradict, to contra flow
counter-	against, opposite	counterrevolution, counterproductive
dis-	reverse, opposite	to displease, to disembark
ex-	former	ex-wife, ex-president
fore-	1. before, in advance 2. front	1. to foretell 2. foreword
inter-	between, from one to another	international, interracial
kilo-	thousand	kilogram, kilowatt
maxi-	most, very large	maximum
non-	not	nonsense, non-resident, non-smoker
over-	more than normal, too much	to overrepeat, to oversleep
post-	after	postwar
quad-	four	quadruple
semi-	half	semidetached
sub-	1. below, less than 2. under	1. subzero, subsonic 2. subway, subtitles
trans-	across, through	transatlantic, transcontinental

uni-	one, single	uniform, unicorn
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The prefixes above given prefixes constitute only apart of the whole list. When considering the given examples, notice that after the addition of prefixes, the part of speech of the words have not changed. That is to say , if a word was a noun before the addition of the prefix, it stayed as a noun. If it was a verb before the addition of a prefix, after the addition of the prefix it stayed as a verb again. This is an important property of prefixes which is not found in suffixes which will be examined now.

## 2.2 Some Suffixes

English Language has many suffixes. “The process of suffixation or suffixing is common in English in derivational formation of lexical items.” (Crystal, 1991: 336). Since suffixes are much used in word formation, they are the word building mechanism of English Language. In suffixation, the part of speech of a word may undergo a change as well. For example, a noun may become a verb after the addition of a suffix, or a verb may become an adjective similarly. The following table shows some suffixes with their meanings and with some examples. It is useful to look at the point of suffixes from that point of view. Here are the examples:

<b>Suffix</b>	<b>Used to Make</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example(s)</b>
-age	nouns	a process or stage	shortage, storage
-ee	nouns	a person to whom something is done	divorcee, trainee
-ful	adjectives	having a particular quality	beautiful, useful
-hood	nouns	a state, often during a particular period of time	childhood, motherhood
-ian	nouns	a person who does something as a job or hobby	historian, comedian, politician
-less	adjectives	not having something	hopeless, friendless
-ize, -ise	verbs	actions producing particular state	To magnetize, to generalize
-ology	nouns	the study of a subject	biology, psychology
-ship	nouns	showing status	membership, friendship
-wards	adverbs	in a particular direction	backwards, upwards
-y	adjectives	having a particular quality of the thing mentioned	cloudy, rainy, fatty, thirsty, greeny

As it was said before, and as it can be understood from the given examples, suffixes may change the part of speech of the word they are added. Thus, suffixes can also be classified as noun forming, verb forming, adjective forming and adverb forming suffixes. In order to visualize this issue, they can be given in a separate table like the follows:

<b>Noun Forming Suffixes</b>	<b>Verb Forming Suffixes</b>	<b>Adjective Forming Suffixes</b>	<b>Adverb Forming Suffixes</b>
-hood	-ate	-able, -(i)ble	-ly
-acy	-(a)tion	-al	-wards
-ism	-en	-ese	-wise
-ness	-ify	-ful	
-ment	-ise, -ize	-ical	
-age		-ish	
-ist		-less	
-y		-like	
-ship		-ous	
-ity		-y	
-ance, -ancy			
-th			
-ure			
-tion			
-er			
-ie			
-ling			
-dom			
-ee			
-eer			
-ess			
-ette			
-or			
-ology			
-ant, -ent			
-en			

It is clear that there are many features of prefixes and suffixes. They have a great area of usage, and they change the meaning of the word they are attached to. However, according to their meanings, prefixes and suffixes can be divided into two groups. After the addition of the first group of prefixes or suffixes the meaning can be understood or guessed. But, after the addition of the second group of prefixes or

suffixes the meaning of the newly formed word may not be understood. That is why the learners may have some problems.

In the formation of the word *rewrite*, for example, prefix *re-* is used. Here since the meaning of the prefix *re-* is clear, which means *again*, the reader can understand the meaning of the new word *rewrite*. So, no problem occurs while the writer trying to work out the meaning of the new word. However, the situation is not like this all the time. Sometimes it may be difficult to understand the meaning of the new word. For instance, in the word *clockwise* some learners may have difficulty in understanding the meaning of the word after the addition of the suffix *-wise*. The reason is that, it is not easy to work out the meaning of the suffix *-wise* after its addition to the word. *Wise* has another meaning in isolation which means *trustworthy*. This can be the reason of the difficulty. So, it is not easy at the same level to understand the meaning of every word after the addition of a prefix or a suffix. Learners must be careful on this point.

In sum, prefixes and suffixes of English Language have many properties. Each type of these affixes has their own areas of usage with different qualities. Learners need to be careful in using these bound morphemes. The reason is that any wrong usage may cause some meaning shifts. That is why problematic points and necessary cures which require special attention will also be dealt with in this paper.

### **3.0 WAYS OF PRESENTING PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES TO THE LEARNERS**

After saying so much about this topic, it is time to pass to other points about the teaching of prefixes and suffixes. This includes some other related areas to the teaching field as well. The reason is that today coursebooks have an important role in the presentation of prefixes and suffixes, and their creation in the mind of the learners. So, while considering this topic, it should be wise to think of some other facts in addition. They are presenting prefixes and suffixes via coursebooks, some other ways of presenting prefixes and suffixes and students' strategies in comprehending prefixes and suffixes. These three topics will be handled one by one.

#### **3.1 Presenting Prefixes and Suffixes via Coursebooks**

Prefixes and suffixes perhaps can best be presented to the learners by the help of coursebooks. The reason is that coursebooks provide a kind of context with the given



information about these things. They form at least a realistic area of usage for the learners. So, learners can create a better understanding of prefixes and suffixes in their minds.

It will be fair to say that most of the books written in the line of the classical approaches were not considering the creation of prefixes or suffixes in the mind of the learners. There were some exceptions like Practice and Progress etc., but a great deal of the old fashioned coursebooks are not in tendency to emphasize the importance of prefixes or suffixes. However, the situation is not the same with the new generation coursebooks which emphasize the creation of prefixes or suffixes. In order to comprehend these all and have a better understanding of this topic, it will be better to examine the creation of prefixes and suffixes by the help of coursebooks.

The writer of this work will dwell on a series of coursebooks to demonstrate this subject. The series of coursebook which will be focused on is *Lifelines* series. This series is composed of four books all with their supplementary materials like teacher's book, workbook and listening cassettes. The series starts with *Lifelines Elementary*. The second book is *Lifelines Pre-intermediate* and *Lifelines Intermediate*. The last book of the series is Presented with another name *Knockout*. By working on the vocabulary sections of these books it can be understood how Prefixes and suffixes are presented to the learners, and how learners go on to create new ones. That is why, the writer of this piece will examine these coursebooks.

The presentation of prefixes or suffixes is not mentioned with their clear name in the first book of the series; however, learners are given words in their contexts, and they are expected to acquire some information about word formation. In this way the first steps in the teaching of prefixes and suffixes begin to take place. Completing the half given words in a list can be accepted as the beginning phase. This level does not change much and go on in the same line throughout the book.

In the second book of the series, which is *Lifelines Pre-intermediate*, the subject of vocabulary, so the topic of prefixes and suffixes are dwelt on more emphatically. For example, suffixes *-an*, *-ish*, *-ese*, and *-i* are presented in the fourth unit of the book to illuminate the learners about countries and their people. This is necessary for learners of that level. However, still the names prefix or suffix are not mentioned in the form of the activities apart from the teacher's book. But, this does not affect the ongoing of the

activity negatively. In sum, the creation of prefixes and suffixes in the mind of the learners go on without a problem.

The third book of the series is *Lifelines Intermediate* the subject of prefixes and suffixes began to take part more explicitly. An example to this situation can be seen in the *vocabulary* part of the unit 11, which focuses on *noun formation*. In this part of the unit noun forming suffixes are dwelt on. Related exercises to the topic are also given. Still the names prefix or suffix are not mentioned. This can be based on the teaching philosophy of the book which can be labeled as discovery method. So, it can be said that the teaching of this topic is explained more in details as the level of the learners increase.

In the last book of the series, Which is called *Knockout*, the name affixes is mentioned in the content of the book. Perhaps the reason of this is that the students are thought to have reached a certain level in which they can comprehend the topic with its title. In the third unit of his book in the vocabulary section both prefixes and suffixes are dwelt on to teach the learners the usage of these bound morphemes. What worth considering here is that the words worked on are taken from the reading passages given in the same unit. By this way, the contextualization of the words, and understanding their meanings becomes easier. This can be considered as a positive point in the creation of prefixes and suffixes in the mind of the learners. With respect to this new coursebook the latest approaches to the teaching of prefixes and suffixes can be clarified as well.

In sum prefixes and suffixes are presented in any modern coursebook can be given according to a plan or an order. This is generally parallel to the level of the learners. Contextualization of the newly learned items help learners understand the meanings of the prefixes and suffixes cognitively. That is why, teaching of these prefixes and suffixes must not be done in any environment lacking context. In brief, teaching of prefixes and suffixes which is a serious matter must be carried out in an authentic atmosphere which is at least realistic.

### **3.2 Some Other Ways of Presenting Prefixes and Suffixes**

Prefixes and suffixes are not only presented by the help of coursebooks which include the whole schedule of the year. There are some other ways of presenting prefixes and suffixes as well. These other ways may be some supplementary materials

or some other assisting materials which help learners learn the formation of prefixes and suffixes and create them in their own products whenever necessary. So, in addition to coursebooks some other materials that help learners must be considered in the creation of prefixes and suffixes.

First of all, supplementary reading materials help learners see and create new prefixes and suffixes in English Language. Stage books of Longman can be given as the best example to this situation. These structural books are composed of six levels with different new vocabulary amounts and with different vocabulary structures including prefixes and suffixes. What is useful in such supplementary reading books is that they provide learners exemplary vocabularies, and pave the way for the creation of prefixes and suffixes. By this way the imagination, so the creativity of the learners increase, and this directly affects the usage of the prefixes and suffixes. That is why, these kind of reading books should be suggested by the teachers of English to develop the word formation, so the prefix and suffix use of the learners.

Secondly, usage and the creation of prefixes and suffixes can be developed by the help of some vocabulary teaching books. This kind of books help learners have more information about prefixes and suffixes by exposing them to corpus as much as possible. This kind of books generally provide a great number of exercises. By the help of these exercises the learner reaches such a level that he can create prefixes and suffixes himself. Of course, here the amount of the exercises should be arranged carefully. The reason is that too much exercise may bore the learner while a very low amount of exercise may not help the learner in developing his or her abilities. That is why, vocabulary teaching lessons should be arranged carefully.

Another way for learners to develop their prefix and suffix creating ability is writing exercises. Thanks to writing exercises, student take some risks and use prefixes and suffixes in their writing. While doing this, they sometimes use prefixes and suffixes differently. This helps them develop their ability in creating prefixes and suffixes. They begin to use language more creatively and more innovatively. These writing exercises do not only improve writing abilities but also learners' strategies in creating prefixes and suffixes. So, in order to develop the creativity of the learners in the subject of prefixes and suffixes, writing should be utilized as a helping power.

No matter efficiently these things are utilized, the use of authentic materials have the utmost importance. Getting information about prefixes and suffixes from television, radio, cassettes and internet gives the learners a sense of genuineness through

information theory. From this, it can be understood that learners have a huge source about this topic.

To sum up, creation of prefixes and suffixes can be done through many ways. These ways depend on the level and the needs of the learners. The learning styles of the learners affect this situation as well. However, it is advised that the learners try their first attempts in the creation of prefixes and suffixes with their coursebooks and later with their supplementary materials. By this way they eliminate the risk of overloading and they can have better results in creating prefixes and suffixes.

### **3.3 Students' Strategies in Comprehending Prefixes and Suffixes**

Understanding the use of prefixes and suffixes is not an easy matter all the time. Students may have difficulty in understanding them, and as a result of this they may form their own strategies in understanding prefixes and suffixes. This also depends on the needs, the level and the learning style of the learners. So, in this part of the work learners' strategies in comprehending prefixes and suffixes will be focused on.

Perhaps the mostly used type of strategy by the learners is generalization principle. In this way of learning the learners make generalizations on the learned prefixes and suffixes. By this way, they make a general rule in their minds. For example, prefix *in-* means *not* mostly. Considering such a situation as a general rule, the learner may take the word *invaluable* as *not of high value* which is wrong. The situation of the suffix *-less* is the same in the word *priceless*. Consequently, sometimes the strategies of the learners may fall short; however, this does not mean that they are always wrong.

Learners sometimes prefer learning the words with prefixes or suffixes as separate words. That is to say, they do not consider the root and the prefix or the suffix of the word separately. This may be a good way of learning new vocabulary items, but such a situation may limit creativity. Since new learned words are taken as separate pieces, the learners may have difficulty in understanding similar structures. So, this way of learning is also utilized by the learners.

Some learners tend to learn a new vocabulary item with the possible prefixes and suffixes that it can take with. This way of learning is mostly dependant on memorization. At first it may seem as a useful procedure, but it limits creativity and puts a great burden on the shoulders of the learners.

In fact, learners' strategies in comprehending prefixes and suffixes may change according to the way they are thought these things. The reason is that the learner chooses his way of learning in parallel with the way he has learned. That is why, teachers of English language should be careful in presenting any point including prefixes and suffixes. There may be different ways of presenting them, but the language teacher should choose the best method for his learners in the light of his learners' needs, level and background.

#### **4.0 PROBLEMS FACED BY LEARNERS IN COMPREHENDING PREFIXES AND SUFFIXES, WAYS OF ELIMINATING THESE PROBLEMS AND DEVELOPING NEW LEARNING WAYS**

While comprehending prefixes and suffixes, learners have some difficulties. These difficulties impede the teaching-learning process, and affect the success of the learners negatively. So, in order to have a better understanding of these prefixes and suffixes, these difficulty areas have to be eliminated. This is the duty of both learners and the teachers. The difficulty areas have to be clarified, their reasons have to be found and the necessary cure has to be provided.

First of all, learners of English Language have a difficulty about the meaning of the prefixes and suffixes. That is to say, some prefixes and suffixes change the meaning of the word they are attached to in parallel with their own meaning. For example, the prefix *sub-* means *under*, and it changes the meaning of the word it is attached to in the same way like submarine and subtitle. However, the situation is not the same every time. The suffix *-less* means *without*, but in the word *priceless* the meaning changes. It means *very valuable*. So, the learners may experience a kind of confusion. This is problem area. This problem can be solved only by working on such exceptional situations.

Secondly, learners may have some problems about suffixes but not prefixes, because suffixes may change the part of speech of a word. For example, the word *establish* is a verb. When the noun forming suffix *-ment* is added to this word the verb changes into a noun as *establishment*. The change in the part of speech of the word may cause problems for some learners. The reason is that, they may have difficulty in classifying these noun forming, verb forming, adjective forming and adverb forming

suffixes. This is true for learners of all kind. However, as much practice is carried out, and as these suffixes are learned cognitively, this difficulty begins to disappear. In sum, learners may easily differentiate different kinds of suffixes and their meanings.

Another difficulty for learners of English Language in learning prefixes and suffixes is that which allomorph or form of the same prefix or suffix to use. For example, new learners of English may say *in* instead of *un*, or *inforgetible* instead of *unforgettable*. This is partially related with the spelling system of English; however, different forms of prefixes and suffixes should be accepted as the main reason of this confusion. So, the solution must be looked for in this respect. The only way out seems practice again. It does not only provide familiarization with the vocabulary items, but also helps the learners understand the logic of such changes. As a result, exposure to the target language has many positive effects.

To sum up, in comprehending prefixes and suffixes, learners may come by with some difficulties as a natural outcome of learning a foreign language. However, none of these problems are unsolvable. The solution to most of these problems depend on exposure and practice. The reason is that learning a language is not a mathematical event which is solved according to some formulas. Instead it requires practice which is exposure. So, in order to strengthen the learners' weak sides, language teachers should supply enough comprehensible input and topic related exercises.

## **5.0 CONCLUSION**

In sum, the topic of prefixes and suffixes cover a significant area in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. It has to be handled carefully, because prefixes and suffixes have an important role in word-forming mechanism of English Language. Both prefixes and suffix have their own characteristics and usage. So, they should not be confused and given utmost impotence.

Prefixes and suffixes can be presented to the learners in different ways, and the creation of these affixes in the mind of the learners may take different forms. This may cause some problems in their comprehension by learners. However, such problems can be solved by the help of some practice and exposure. Apart from these all, if foreign language teachers want their learners to understand the topic of prefixes and suffixes well, they have to find genuine ways of presenting them to the learners. This kind of things can be achieved only through using them in a setting or in their context. If this is done so, learners can understand the meanings of the prefixes and suffixes better, and

they can be more successful in real life communication situations. In addition to these all, foreign language teachers should be given courses of lexicology. This is necessary, because such a course can help them how to teach new vocabulary items, so prefixes and suffixes to the learners. That is why, teachers should instruct their learners in this respect if they want their learners to increase the level of proficiency.

As a consequence, prefixes and suffixes have a very important place in the word-building mechanism of English Language. Learners may have problems in their formation, but none of these problems are unsolvable. A careful survey of the problematic areas may help learners see their weak sides and the teachers reconsider their way of teaching. This also shows that teaching profession requires development all the time. As a consequence, like all the other subject matters, success in comprehending and creating prefixes and suffixes goes from the way of catching up with the teaching technology which is a must for all teachers and learners.

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