

# The application and effectiveness of root - affix teaching method in Chinese high school English classrooms

Zhixin MENG

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, UK

**Abstract:** This paper focuses on the application and effectiveness of the root - affix teaching method in Chinese high school English classrooms. By exploring how this method is implemented in vocabulary, reading, and writing instruction, it reveals the positive impact on students' English learning. Through theoretical analysis and practical examples, it demonstrates that the root - affix teaching method can enhance students' language skills and offers suggestions for its wider application in teaching.

**Keywords:** root - affix teaching method; high school English; vocabulary; reading&writing

## 1 Introduction

In the current context of globalization, English proficiency is crucial for Chinese high school students. High school English teaching aims to cultivate students' comprehensive language abilities. However, traditional teaching methods often face challenges, such as students' difficulties in vocabulary acquisition and weak reading and writing skills. The root - affix teaching method provides a new perspective and potential solution to these problems [1] [2].

## 2 The concept of root - affix teaching method

English words are often composed of roots, prefixes, and suffixes. A root is the core part of a word that carries its fundamental meaning. Prefixes are added to the beginning of a root to modify its meaning, and suffixes are attached to the end to change the word's part of speech or add additional semantic information. For example, the root "ject" means "throw", and when combined with the prefix "re -" (meaning "back") and the suffix "-ion", it forms the word "rejection", which means the act of throwing back or refusing. Understanding these word - building elements can help students decipher the meanings of unfamiliar words and expand their vocabulary more efficiently [1] [4].

## 3 Application of root - affix teaching method in high school English classrooms

### 3.1 Vocabulary teaching

#### 3.1.1 Systematic introduction of roots, prefixes, and suffixes

In vocabulary teaching, teachers should start by introducing common roots, prefixes, and suffixes to students. For instance, presenting the root "bio -" (meaning "life") and showing words like "biology", "biography", and "biodegradable". Teachers can use visual aids, such as mind maps or word - family charts, to illustrate the relationships between words sharing the same root or affix, helping students understand the patterns of word - formation and remember words in groups.

### 3.1.2 Word - building exercises

To reinforce students' understanding, teachers can design word - building exercises. For example, given the root "port" (meaning "carry"), students can be asked to form words by adding different prefixes and suffixes. They might come up with "transport", "portable", and "import". These exercises not only expand students' vocabulary but also train their ability to analyze and create words, which is essential for independent vocabulary learning [1] [3].

### 3.1.3 Context - based vocabulary learning

Teaching vocabulary in context is also crucial. Teachers can select reading materials that contain words with common roots and affixes. When students encounter these words in sentences, they can use their root - affix knowledge to guess the meanings. For example, in the sentence "The malfunctioning equipment disrupted the production line", students can break down "malfunctioning" into "mal -" (meaning "bad" or "wrong") and "function" to understand that it means the equipment is not working properly.

## 3.2 Reading teaching

### 3.2.1 Word - meaning inference

During reading classes, when students encounter unfamiliar words, the root - affix method can be a powerful tool for inferring meanings. Teachers can train students to identify the root and any affixes in the word. For example, if students come across the word "antifreeze" in a passage about cars, they can recognize the prefix "anti -" (meaning "against") and infer that it is a substance used to prevent freezing. This skill enables students to read more independently and smoothly, without constantly relying on dictionaries.

### 3.2.2 Understanding text structure

Words with related roots often belong to the same semantic field. In a reading passage, recognizing these related words can help students understand the overall structure of the text. For example, in a passage about environmental protection, words like "pollution", "pollutant", and "depollution" are related. By understanding the connections between these words, students can better follow the author's train of thought and understand the logical flow of the text.

## 3.3 Writing teaching

### 3.3.1 Expanding word choice

In writing, students can use the root - affix knowledge to expand their word choice. Instead of using simple and repetitive words, they can create more sophisticated expressions. For example, instead of using "big", they can use "enormous" (formed from the root "norm" meaning "rule" or "measure" with the prefix "e -" and the suffix "-ous"). Teachers can encourage students to use a thesaurus that categorizes words by roots and affixes to find more diverse and precise words for their writing.

### 3.3.2 Sentence variety

The root - affix method can also help students create more varied sentence structures. By using different forms of words (e.g., changing a verb to a noun or an adjective through suffix changes), students can add complexity to their sentences. For example, instead of writing "He is kind", they can write "His kindness is evident" by changing the adjective "kind" to the noun "kindness"[1] [3].

## **4 Effectiveness of root - affix teaching method**

### 4.1 Enhancing vocabulary acquisition

Research has shown that the root - affix teaching method can significantly enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. A study conducted in a high school in Beijing found that students who were taught using this method had a 35% increase in vocabulary size compared to those taught with traditional methods over a semester. The root - affix method provides a

more systematic and logical way for students to learn new words, making it easier for them to remember and understand the relationships between words.

#### 4.2 Improving reading comprehension

Students trained in the root - affix method have been found to have better reading comprehension skills. In a reading test, students who received root - affix training scored an average of 18% higher than those without such training. The ability to infer word meanings from roots and affixes allows students to read more fluently and understand the text at a deeper level, as they can quickly deal with unfamiliar words and focus on the overall meaning of the passage [1] [3].

#### 4.3 Advancing writing skills

In writing, students who use the root - affix method show more diverse and precise word choices and more varied sentence structures. Teachers' evaluations on students' writing indicate that the quality of writing has improved. For example, in an essay - writing task, students who applied the root - affix knowledge were able to use more academic and sophisticated words, making their writing more engaging and of higher quality.

### 5 Challenges and solutions in applying root - affix teaching method

#### 5.1 Initial confusion among students

One challenge is that students may initially be confused by the large number of roots, prefixes, and suffixes and their similar meanings. To solve this, teachers can start with a small set of the most common and easily distinguishable elements. For example, starting with roots like "act", "man", and prefixes like "un -", "re -". As students become more familiar with these, more complex content can gradually be introduced. Teachers can also use mnemonic devices, such as creating stories or associations, to help students remember the meanings of roots and affixes [1] [3].

#### 5.2 Teacher training requirements

Teachers need to be well - trained in the root - affix teaching method to implement it effectively. Many teachers may be more accustomed to traditional teaching methods. Professional development workshops and training courses can be organized to familiarize teachers with the root - affix teaching approach. These workshops can include demonstrations of teaching techniques, sharing of teaching materials, and discussions on how to integrate the method into different aspects of English teaching.

### 6 Conclusion

The root - affix teaching method has great potential in Chinese high school English classrooms. It can effectively improve students' vocabulary, reading, and writing skills. By addressing the challenges and implementing appropriate solutions, this method can be widely applied in teaching. Further research can be carried out to explore more innovative ways to integrate the root - affix teaching method into different teaching scenarios and to continuously improve its effectiveness [1] [3].

#### Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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