

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ETYMOLOGY FOR LEARNING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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**Abstract:** *Nowadays, the majority of language learners struggle to learn English vocabulary. This article argues that etymology is useful for learning English vocabulary. Learning is made easier for vocabulary learners who are aware of the etymology of terms. Due to the large number of borrowed, derived, and common root terms.*

**Keywords:** *etymology, meaningful learning, vocabulary, derived words, borrowed words.*

### Introduction

Firstly, what is its etymology? The study of word etymology is a field of study. Etymology is essentially the study of the origins of words. Consider etymology to be the study of a word's ancestry for another approach to comprehending its meaning. Oxford (1985) cites Cohen's list of strategies used by a successful language learner. According to him, "teaching involves such items as making association, attending to the meaning of the part of the word, placing the word in a topical group with similar words, visualizing and contextualizing it, linking it to the situation in which it appears, creating a mental image of it, and associating some physical sensation to it.". Wilkins (1972) claims that, according to the psychology of language, people learn and retain better words that have been presented to them with a range of visual and other associations (p. 131). According to Saif (1995), the students need to find out the ways to add about words to their vocabulary and also know the meanings of words. The words students encounter are of different types. Some words are used every day (active vocabulary), and some are used in specific situations (passive vocabulary). The easiest way to increase one's vocabulary is to recognize new things and about new experiences. The context and context clues often lead to the meaning of unfamiliar words. It would be helpful to refer to a dictionary when the context clues do not provide clues to the meaning of words. She also emphasizes the importance of recognizing the word elements, which include prefixes, suffixes, roots, synonyms, and antonyms. One such strategy might include learning several prefixes, stems, and suffixes each week along with practice in attempting to decide what a word means using some knowledge of etymology. Although etymology stands at the periphery of second-language teacher meaningful learning education programs, etymological training could benefit second-language instruction. The teacher and student, by becoming serious amateur etymologists, would find themselves more sensitive to the meaning of words and their relationships with other words from both history and other

languages. The knowledge of these word relationships could contribute to what educational psychologists call meaningful learning (Ausubel, 1968), a quality of learning that is related to prior learning and thus is more likely to be retained and generalized to other learning (Harris D. Pierson, 1989). Ausubel (1967) describes meaningful learning as a task that is relatable on a nonarbitrary, substantive basis to a previously learned background of... ideas and information', and emphatically differentiates it from rote learning, which he describes as 'discrete and relatively isolated... only relatable to cognitive structure in an arbitrary, verbatim fashion' (p. 209). Because it can be anchored to 'existing ideational systems in the learner's cognitive structure' (p. 209), meaningful learning is less vulnerable than rote learning to forgetting. Meaningful learning takes place when the learner connects new learning to what he or she already knows (Thelen, 1986). The etymological information that the students abstract from the dictionary is then interjected into the original context to demonstrate the power of such information. Fascination appears in the sentence, 'Size has a fascination of its own'.

To keep the burden of active learning on the student, I question the students about the relationship between the etymological information, in this instance fascinare, and the concept of size. Provided that the learners know what to cast a spell means, a lively 'meaningful' discussion should follow in which the use of the word fascinate can be explored in other contexts, such as in the relationship between men and women or the arts (Harris D. Pierson, 1989).

Etymology is the scientific study of the origin, history, and derivation of words. When you know the meaning of a Latin or Greek root, prefix, or suffix, you can better understand and more easily remember all the vocabulary words built on these elements that exist in English words. Learning the etymology of English words, you will feel comfortable with words—you will use new words with self-assurance, and you will be able to figure out the meanings of the English vocabulary words you hear or read even if you have never heard or seen these words before. That is why the best approach to learning new vocabulary words is through their etymologies (Masoud Hashemi, 2011). Understanding etymology can also help learners deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words based on known roots or affixes. For example, knowing that "bene-" means "good" in Latin can help learners recognize positive meanings in words like "beneficial," "benevolent," and "benediction" (Green, 2003). Studies have shown that knowledge of word origins can enhance memory retention. When learners understand the etymological roots of vocabulary, they create mental associations that allow for quicker recall. This is because etymological study often taps into the mnemonic technique of association, where learners link new information to familiar concepts. For instance, the Greek root "geo-," meaning "earth," links words like "geography" (study of the earth) and "geology" (study of the earth's structure) (Nagel, 2014).

## Conclusion

In conclusion, etymology plays an important role in vocabulary development by allowing students to investigate the origins, structures, and meanings of words. This method not only improves comprehension, but it also improves recall and fosters a more comprehensive knowledge of language. Future research could look into the role of etymology in language learning across a variety of learner groups and contexts to identify its true pedagogical potential.

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