THE MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE CAMBRIDGE PRIMARY ENGLISH CURRICULUM AND ITS POTENTIAL APPLICATION IN UZBEK LANGUAGE EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article analyzes the core principles and methodological approaches to teaching morphology within the Cambridge Primary English curriculum. It demonstrates that morphology in this curriculum is not presented as a separate module, but is integrated into reading, writing, and communicative competencies through a principle of gradual progression. The article also examines key principles of the Cambridge approach – such as functional grammar, text-based instruction, and alignment with the CEFR – and discusses the possibilities of applying these principles to mother-tongue (Uzbek) language education. The study concludes that adapting the Cambridge model to local educational conditions can contribute to the development of a modern, scientifically grounded, and practice-oriented model of morphological minimum in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Cambridge Primary English, morphological minimum, teaching morphology, functional grammar, cognitive progression, spiral curriculum, text-based grammar, CEFR A1–A2, affixation, word formation, derivation, morphological competence, communicative approach.

Introduction

In contemporary education systems, the effectiveness of language instruction is often determined by the extent to which grammatical knowledge is integrated with communicative practice. The Cambridge Primary English curriculum offers an innovative approach in this regard, treating morphology not as an isolated subject, but as an integral component of reading, writing, and communication skills. Built

upon the principles of gradual morphological progression, functional application, and text-based instruction, this curriculum aims to develop learners' linguistic and communicative abilities simultaneously.

In the process of modernizing mother-tongue (Uzbek) language education in Uzbekistan, the use of international best practices—particularly structured systems such as the Cambridge curriculum—is gaining increasing importance. The primary objective of this article is to examine the morphological approach of the Cambridge Primary English curriculum and to identify the possibilities of adapting its principles to develop an effective model of morphological minimum for Uzbek language instruction.

In the Cambridge Primary English curriculum, morphology is not taught as an independent module; rather, it is integrated into reading and writing competencies. Nevertheless, morphological knowledge is delivered through a systematically organized approach founded on gradual progression. Such an approach enables learners to develop consistent competencies related to word structure, word forms, affixation processes, and their functional use in communication.

Overall, grammar holds a central position in the Cambridge educational framework. The Cambridge International Primary Programme aims to prepare learners for scientific understanding and skills from early grades and promotes an integrative, interactive learning environment across subjects—including English, mathematics, and science [1, p. 165].

The effectiveness of grammar instruction largely depends on teachers' assessment practices and pedagogical approaches. Over time, learners may misunderstand certain grammatical aspects or make errors [2, p. 246], which encourages teachers to refine their methodology and develop clear, comprehensible, and learner-friendly guidelines [3, p. 50]. In English language instruction, mastering cohesive devices, linking adverbials, and subtle grammatical nuances presents additional challenges. Understanding these elements is crucial for learners acquiring English as a second language [4, p. 235].

If grammatical rules and instructional guidelines are not regularly updated, outdated or inaccurate explanations may gradually emerge, negatively affecting the overall quality of education [5, p. 7]. Therefore, teachers are required to revise grammatical materials based on contemporary scientific sources and ensure that learners develop accurate and consistent grammatical competence. Such an

approach improves the quality of grammar acquisition and contributes to the formation of learners as active and independent thinkers [6].

The Cambridge curriculum introduces morphology primarily through the understanding of word formation, affixation processes, and word-structure patterns. In this process, learners gradually develop practical awareness of the structural components of a word—root, base, and affixes. The practical implementation of this approach can be observed in the distribution of morphological topics within Grades 5–6.

Stage 5. Beginning from Stage 5, more complex derivational affixes are introduced, including suffixes such as –ive, –tion, –sion, –cian, and prefixes such as over–, under–, anti–, co–. This stage prepares learners for higher-level morphological analysis, as these affixes reflect deeper semantic shifts and grammatical functions.

Stage 6. In the final stage, learners develop the ability to conduct advanced analysis of word formation by identifying the root, base, and affix components; understanding the meaning of new words through morphological families. At this stage, morphology is regarded as a primary source for developing learners' lexical and semantic competence.

In the Cambridge Primary English curriculum, morphology is closely integrated with syntax. Parts of speech are introduced through a progressively expanding system, allowing learners to understand grammatical units not only in terms of their formal properties but also through their functional roles in discourse. This approach facilitates deeper comprehension of how morphological structures operate within authentic language use.

In the Cambridge curriculum, the teaching of verb forms is considered one of the most essential components of morphology and is presented in a gradually increasing order of complexity.

Stage 5–6. At higher stages, instruction shifts to advanced verb forms, including:

- Perfect forms (have/has + V3);
- Modal verbs;
- Basic passive constructions (Passive Voice).

This phase ensures a deeper mastery of the morphological system of the verb and prepares learners to produce independent, well-structured texts.

The Cambridge curriculum places particular emphasis on understanding the internal structure of words. From Stage 3 to Stage 6, learners progressively acquire

the mechanisms of word formation. The program focuses primarily on root meaning, encouraging students to identify the semantic core of words. For example: sign → signal → signature; act → action → actor → active.

This approach not only enriches learners' vocabulary but also develops their analytical skills in lexical-morphological interpretation. Understanding meaning through word families strengthens semantic connections and enables students to deduce the meanings of new words independently.
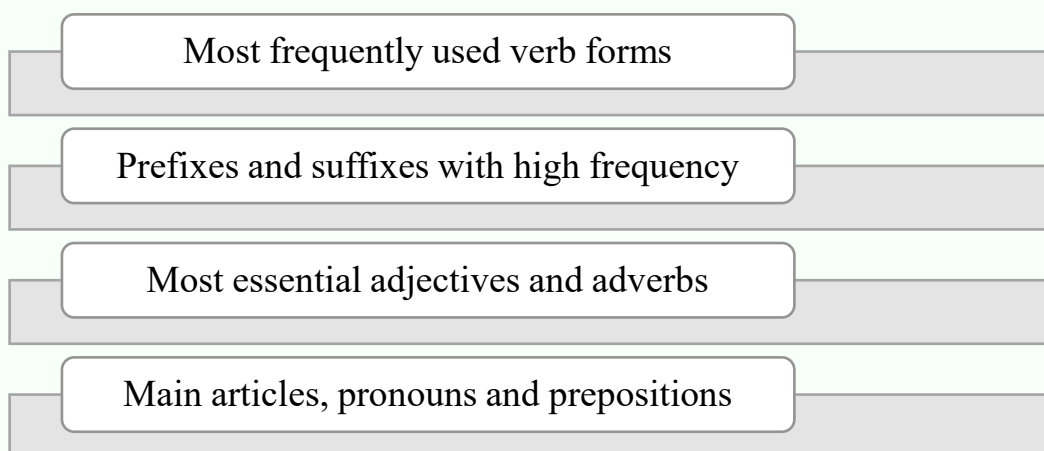
The Cambridge Primary English curriculum does not present grammar—and morphology in particular—as a separate, isolated component. Instead, it is taught within an integrated framework closely linked to communicative activity. This approach aims to develop not only learners' linguistic knowledge but also their communicative competence. Therefore, when determining the morphological minimum, the Cambridge system relies on several scientific and theoretical principles.

First, the morphological minimum consists of the most essential morphemes, grammatical units, and rules governing their use, serving as a foundational framework for learners' conscious acquisition of language. The selection of core elements of the morphological system in the curriculum enables learners to understand word structure, distinguish grammatical meanings, and prepare for the later acquisition of complex syntactic constructions. Research also confirms that understanding morphemes is a decisive factor in mastering subsequent grammatical structures [7. 171]; [8. 448].

Second, the study of functional morphemes plays a crucial role in ensuring grammatical cohesion, syntactic relations, and the coherence of spoken and written discourse. Such units contribute to the formation of logically structured, orderly, and grammatically accurate language production [9]. For this reason, the Cambridge system teaches morphology not only from a structural perspective, but also from a functional one.

Furthermore, teacher support aimed at fostering learners' understanding of morphological units enhances their ability to conduct deeper textual analysis, interpret meaning accurately, and develop independent thinking skills [10.105]; [11.169]. Conscious learning of morphology strengthens learners' interest in language, their confidence, and their communicative competence. Additionally, the curriculum is based on the following key principles [12]:

1. Functional Grammar Principle — Linking Grammar to Communicative Purpose. In the Cambridge curriculum, grammatical units are selected according to real communicative situations that learners are likely to encounter. That is, grammatical material—including morphological forms—is determined by the learner's needs in producing texts, understanding written discourse, and engaging in purposeful communication. This principle promotes a shift from "grammar for the sake of grammar" to "grammar for communication." Therefore, every morphological unit included in the curriculum is selected based on its specific communicative function.

2. Cognitive Progression Principle — Gradual Increase in Complexity. In selecting morphological content, the Cambridge curriculum takes into account the learner's age and cognitive development. Morphological units are introduced systematically from simple to complex, following a **spiral curriculum model**. At **Stages 5–6**, learners are introduced to semantically productive and structurally complex affixes such as –cian, –sion, as well as prefixes such as over-, under-, anti-This progression is grounded in the natural developmental pattern of morphological competence.

3. Use-Frequency Principle — The Most Frequent Units Are Taught First. One of the key principles of the Cambridge curriculum is the prioritization of morphological units based on their frequency of occurrence in real communication. For children aged **5–11**, this means that morphological structures that appear most commonly in everyday language use are introduced first.

Most frequently used verb forms

Prefixes and suffixes with high frequency

Most essential adjectives and adverbs

Main articles, pronouns and prepositions

These units constitute the core components of the grammatical minimum. This principle prevents cognitive overload and ensures that the structures learned are actively used in communication.

4. Text-Based Grammar Principle — Teaching Grammar Through Text. One of the innovative features of the Cambridge curriculum is its text-based approach to grammar instruction. Morphological and syntactic units are not taught as isolated rules but are embedded within the semantic and communicative structure of a text. Thus, although a dedicated "Grammar and Punctuation" section exists, all grammatical elements within it are applied in the contexts of Reading and Writing. This enables learners to understand the functional role of grammatical forms within authentic discourse.

5. CEFR Compatibility Principle – Alignment with International Standards. The Cambridge curriculum defines its morphological minimum in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) at the A1–A2 levels. This means that:

- the grammatical minimum is based on learners' essential communicative needs,
- morphological units are selected according to the CEFR lexical–grammatical inventory.

This alignment turns the Cambridge morphological system into a standardized, scientifically grounded, and internationally comparable model.

6. Learner-Centred Principle – Psycholinguistic Criteria Appropriate to Learner Age. In selecting morphological units, the Cambridge curriculum takes into account learners' age-specific characteristics, psycholinguistic preparedness, and communicative needs. Therefore, morphological structures are chosen according to the following criteria:

- they must be comprehensible to learners;
- they must have a high likelihood of real use in communication;
- complex grammatical forms must be introduced gradually.

This approach creates a natural, gradual, and effective psychological environment for the acquisition of grammatical material.

The primary aim of the article is to develop scientifically grounded and practically applicable criteria for defining the morphological minimum in mother-tongue education. Contemporary pedagogical and linguo-methodological research demonstrates that adapting international practices – particularly the principles of the Cambridge Primary English curriculum – to local educational contexts is

methodologically significant for establishing an effective model of grammatical minimum.

In recent years, Uzbekistan has been actively engaged in modernizing mother-tongue education and fundamentally revising school textbooks and curricula. Developing competency-based textbooks aligned with international standards has become one of the key priorities of national education policy. In this context, the Cambridge curriculum and textbooks are being examined as examples of foreign educational practice and are increasingly used as methodological models in the creation of a new generation of Uzbek language textbooks. This process also provides opportunities to apply principles such as scientific validity, functionality, and alignment with modern competencies when defining the morphological minimum. The approaches proposed by the Cambridge system offer universal, practical, and integrated scientific foundations that can be effectively adapted to Uzbek language morphology.

To align the process of determining the morphological minimum in Uzbek mother-tongue education with contemporary requirements, it is essential to draw on the following Cambridge principles:

Functional application. First and foremost, it is necessary to identify the most frequently used morphological forms in actual communication and place them at the core of the minimum. This principle ensures that learners acquire the grammatical forms most essential for real communicative situations.

Gradual progression (spiral approach). Morphological units should be taught systematically from simple to complex, taking into account learners' developmental characteristics, psycholinguistic readiness, and level of abstract thinking. This Cambridge approach ensures the continuous reinforcement of morphological knowledge.

Role in text (text-based approach). Instead of memorizing rules in isolation, morphological forms should be learned through texts, which strengthens learners' semantic and communicative competencies. Each morphological unit is introduced based on its functional role within a text.

Communicative needs (alignment with CEFR). Selecting morphological units based on learners' essential communicative needs is a core requirement of the modern competency-based approach.

Age-appropriate psycholinguistics. In determining the morphological minimum, learners' age-specific characteristics, cognitive development, and communicative preparedness serve as fundamental criteria.

Based on these criteria, it becomes possible to develop a scientifically grounded, communication-oriented, functional, and practice-based model of the morphological minimum for Uzbek language morphology. Drawing from the principles of the Cambridge model, the following methodological directions may be proposed for teaching Uzbek morphology:

Principle	Explanation
Application of the Spiral Model	The repeated introduction of topics, with an incremental increase in complexity at each recurrence, contributes to the systematic development of learners' morphological knowledge.
Selection of Affixes Based on Frequency	Prioritizing the most frequently used affixes (e.g., –lar, –ni, –da, –lik, –chi, –siz, –dor, etc.) facilitates learners' practical communicative performance.
Teaching Parts of Speech Through Text	Teaching parts of speech through their functional roles within a text ensures high instructional efficiency.
Developing a Minimal, Functional, and Gradually Structured Morphological Minimum	Presenting morphological units gradually, systematically, and in accordance with learners' age, knowledge level, and communicative needs improves overall instructional quality.

These recommendations, when adapted to local conditions, can enable the development of a modern, scientifically informed, and practically relevant morphological minimum model for Uzbekistan's educational system based on Cambridge's experience. Consequently, the redesign of national mother-tongue textbooks can be aligned with international best practices, thereby contributing to a new stage in improving educational quality.

Conclusion

The Cambridge Primary English curriculum seeks to enhance language learning effectiveness by integrating morphology with communicative practices and employing functional, gradual, and text-based instructional principles. This approach supports not only deeper mastery of grammatical structures but also the development of learners' communicative competence.

In Uzbek language education, adopting Cambridge's experience by revising learning materials, designing the morphological minimum on functional and developmental principles, and introducing text-based instructional methods can significantly improve the quality of language teaching. A morphological minimum model aligned with international standards (CEFR) and grounded in age-appropriate psycholinguistic criteria has the potential to introduce new qualitative indicators into Uzbekistan's educational system. At the same time, adapting Cambridge principles to the specific linguistic features of the Uzbek language requires a rigorous scientific–methodological approach. Future research and practical initiatives in this direction will make a meaningful contribution to the advancement of mother-tongue education.

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