

Handout 3: Word formation in English

1. Derivation

Derivation = all aspects of word structure involving affixation that is not inflectional

- derivation relates different lexemes to each other, while inflection relates different word forms to each other.

1.1 Zero-derivation (=conversion)

- which of the two word classes is more basic?

RULE OF THUMB: THE (ZERO-)DERIVED LEXEME TAKES THE MEANING OF THE MORE BASIC LEXEME AND ADDS ADDITIONAL SEMANTIC COMPONENTS

- (1) a. cook (v.) – cook (n.)
b. father (v.) – father (n.)

1.2 Adverbs derived from adjectives

- not all English adverbs are derived from adjectives by adding *-ly*!
- simple adverbs (monomorphemic and complex): *yesterday, today, often, never*
- conversion: *fast* (**fastly*), *hard* (\neq *hardly*)

1.3 Nouns derived from nouns

Some examples (Carstairs-McCarthy 2002:49)

- (2) a. small X: *-let, -ette, -ie* (e.g. *droplet, booklet, cigarette, doggie*)
b. female X: *-ess, -ine* (e.g. *waitress, princess, heroine*)
c. inhabitant of X: *-er, -(i)an* (e.g. *Londoner, Berliner*)
d. state of being a X: *-ship, -hood* (e.g. *kinship, motherhood, neighbourhood*)
e. devotee of or expert on X: *-ist, -ian* (e.g. *contortionist, Maoist, morphologist, historian*)

Exercise 1: Why are the suffixes in (2) considered derivational, even though they do not change the word class of their base? Find further examples involving these suffixes, illustrating properties of derivation as opposed to inflection!

1.4 Nouns derived from other word classes

- nouns from adjectives (a selection)
- (3) a. *-ity* (*sensitivity, acceptability, diagonality, humanity*)
b. *-ness* (*abominableness, barefootedness*)
c. *-ism* (*abnormalism, conservatism*)
- nouns derived from verbs (a selection)
- (4) a. *-ance, -ence*
b. *-ment*
c. *-ing*
d. *-((a)t)ion*
e. *-al*
f. *-er*

Exercise 2: Find two examples for each of the suffixes in (4) (not the ones from the book!)

- not all the suffixes in (4) are interchangeable; the same base may occur with more than one, involving a difference in meaning
- the meaning of the derived noun is often not predictable, i.e. the meanings of the verb and the resulting noun can be far removed from each other.

1.5 Adjectives derived from adjectives

- deadjectival adjectives are mainly formed by way of prefixation

- (5) a. *un-* (e.g. *uneatable, unreadable, unlawful, untouchable*)
b. *in-* (e.g. *inedible, illegible, illegal, intangible*)

Exercise 3: Is there a systematic difference between the bases combining with *un-* and those combining with *in-* (or one of its allomorphs)?

(6) *-ish* (e.g. *deepish, fortyish, hardish, Mondayish*.)

(7) 'Trust Davie Morrow.' 'You know him?' 'Ish. He's a regular across the road.' (OED)

1.6 Adjectives derived from other word classes

- deverbal adjectives are often hard to distinguish from inflected verb forms (*-ed, -ing*). Their status can be tested in contexts that allow only verbs or only adjectives:

(8) a. I read a very interesting book.

b. She saved me from a book which was not interesting me.

c. *She saved me from a book which was not very interesting me.

(9) a. The people at the departmental party sounded very drunk.

b. The teachers had drunk more than the students.

c. *The teachers had very drunk more than the students.

(10) a. The bike seemed more damaged than the truck.

b. The bike got damaged by the truck.

- other suffixes deriving adjectives:

(11) a. *-able*: e.g. *breakable, reliable*

b. *-ent, -ant*: e.g. *repellent, expectant, conversant*

c. *-ive*: e.g. *convincive, elaborative, explosive*

(12) a. *-ful*: e.g. *wonderful, praiseful, sweatful, helpful*

b. *-less*: e.g. *hopeless, ageless, aitchless, heartless, meaningless*

c. *-al*: e.g. *original, altitudinal, componential*

d. *-ish*: e.g. *boyish, selfish*

1.7 Verbs derived from verbs

- only prefixes

(12) a. *re-*: e.g. *repaint, resubmit*

b. *de-*: e.g. *decompose, deconstruct*

c. *un-*: e.g. *unbreak, untie*

d. *dis-*: e.g. *disappreciate, disclose*

1.8 Verbs derived from other word classes

- from nouns

(13) a. *de-*: e.g. *deflesh, defoliage, debug, demiracle*

- b. *-ise/-ize*: e.g. *organise, patronise, terrorise, lexicalise*
- c. *-(i)fy*: e.g. *acidify, gentrify, classify*

2. Non-affixal processes of derivation ('derivation' is used in a broader sense here!)

2.1 Change of stress

- (14) a. *object* - *object*
 b. *pérmít* - *perμίt*
 c. *tránsfer* - *transfér*
 d. *próject* - *projéct*
 e. *íncrease* - *incréase*
 f. *cónduct* - *condúct*
 g. *súbject* - *subjéct*

2.2 Change in the final consonant

- (15) a. *belief* (n.) - *believe* (v.)
 b. *close* (a.) - *close* (v.)
 c. *house* (n.) - *house* (v.)
 d. *sheeth* - *unsheathe*
 e. *mouth* (n.) - *mouth* (v.)
 f. *use* (n.) - *use* (v.)

2.3 Vowel change (unproductive)

- (16) a. *seat* - *sit*
 b. *song* - *sing*

2.4 Vowel and consonant change

- (17) a. *breath* - *breathe*
 b. *bath* - *bathe*

3. Compounding

Compounds are words formed by combining roots

3.1 Distinguishing compounds from phrases

- Stress (see Handout 1)
- Compounds tend to have idiosyncratic meanings (but not always!)

3.2 Compound verbs

- a rare type of compounding
- (18) a. *stir-fry, freeze-dry*
 b. *browbeat, sidestep, manhandle, handwash*
 c. *whitewash, blacklist, foulmouth*
 d. *out-fox, underestimate*

3.3 Compound adjectives

- (19) a. *sky-high, coal-black, knee-deep, care-free*
 b. *light-green, red-ripe, lukewarm*
 c. *inbuilt, underfull*

3.4 Compound nouns

- nouns are most common as compounds
- (20) a. *film society*
 b. *pickpocket, swearword*
 c. *greenhouse, wildfire, madman*

d. *afterbirth, income*

3.4.1 Types of nominal compound

- primary ('root') vs secondary ('synthetic') compounds

In secondary (synthetic) compounds the first element is interpreted as the object of the verb contained in the second element.

- (21) a. breadwinner, shareholding, bloodshed, crime prevention
b. *backbone, barman, nutshell*

- **headed** ('endocentric') vs **headless** ('exocentric', 'bahuvrihi') compounds

- (22) a. *book cover*
b. *pickpocket, take-off*

- **copulative** (dvandva) compounds

- (23) a. *singer-songwriter, poet-translator, maidservant* (**appositional** compound)
b. *the mind-body problem, the morphology-syntax interface*

4. Other types

4.1 Blends and acronyms

(see Basismodul handouts)

4.2 Phrasal words ('phrase compounds', 'compound phrases')

Phrasal words are complex items that function as words, although their internal structure is not that of a compound (e.g. head last), but rather that of a clause or phrase.

- (24) a. couldn't-care-less (a.)
b. dusk-to-dawn (curfew)
c. pen-and-paper (theories)
d. look-alike (sculpture)

Reading for next week: Schmid: ch.6 (obligatory)