

Module II. Lecture 10

Affixation

Plan

1. Definition. Degree of derivation
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4. Suffixation. Peculiarities of some suffixes

1. Definition. Degree of derivation

Affixation is one of the most productive ways of word-building throughout the history of English. It consists in adding an affix to the stem of a definite part of speech. Affixation is divided into suffixation and prefixation.

Suffixation is more productive than prefixation. In Modern English suffixation is characteristic of noun and adjective formation, while prefixation is typical of verb formation (*incoming, trainee, principal, promotion*).

Unlike roots, affixes are always bound forms. The difference between suffixes and prefixes, it will be remembered, is not confined to their respective position, suffixes being "fixed after" and prefixes "fixed before" the stem. It also concerns their function and meaning.

A suffix is a derivational morpheme following the stem and forming a new derivative in a different part of speech or a different word class, cf. *-en, -y, -less* in *hearten, hearty, heartless*. So the main function of suffixes in Modern English is to form one part of speech from another, the secondary function is to change the lexical meaning of the same part of speech. (e.g. «educate» is a verb, «educatee» is a noun, and «music» is a noun, «musicdom» is also a noun).

Depending on the purpose of research, various classifications of suffixes have been used and suggested. Suffixes have been classified according to their origin, parts of speech they served to form, their frequency, productivity and other characteristics. From the etymological point of view affixes are classified into the same two large groups as words: **native** and **borrowed**. Here we can point out the following groups:

- a) native (Germanic), such as *-er, -ful, -less, -ly*.
- b) Romanic, such as: *-tion, -ment, -able, -eer*.
- c) Greek, such as: *-ist, -ism, -ize*.
- d) Russian, such as *-nik*.

Affixes can also be classified into **productive** and **non-productive** types. Here we can point out the following groups:

- a) by **productive affixes** we mean the ones, which take part in deriving new words in this particular period of language development, such as: *-er, -ize, --ly, -ness*.
- b) semi-productive, such as: *-eer, -ette, -ward*.
- c) non-productive, such as: *-ard (drunkard), -th (length)*.

Derived words formed by affixation may be the result of one or several applications of word-formation rule and thus the stems of words making up a

word-cluster enter into derivational relations of different degrees. The zero degree of derivation is ascribed to simple words, i.e. words whose stem is homonymous with a word-form and often with a root-morpheme, e.g. atom, haste, devote, anxious, horror, etc. Derived words whose bases are built on simple stems and thus are formed by the application of one derivational affix are described as having the first degree of derivation, e.g. atomic, hasty, devotion, etc. Derived words formed by two consecutive stages of coining possess the second degree of derivation, etc., e.g. atomical, hastily, devotional, etc.

Distinction is naturally made between prefixal and suffixal derivatives according to the last stage of derivation, which determines the nature of the ICs of the pattern that signals the relationship of the derived word with its motivating source unit, cf. unjust (un-+just), justify, (just+ify), arrangement (arrange + -ment), non-smoker (non- + smoker). Words like reappearance, unreasonable, denationalize, are often qualified as prefixal-suffixal derivatives. The reader should clearly realize that this qualification is relevant only in terms of the constituent morphemes such words are made up of, i.e. from the angle of morphemic analysis. From the point of view of derivational analysis such words are mostly either suffixal or prefixal derivatives, e.g. sub-atomic = sub- + (atom + + -ic), unreasonable = un- +(reason + -able), denationalize == de-+(national + -ize), discouragement = (dis- + courage) + -ment.

A careful study of a great many suffixal and prefixal derivatives has revealed an essential difference between them. In Modern English suffixation is mostly characteristic of noun and adjective formation, while prefixation is mostly typical of verb formation. The distinction also rests on the role different types of meaning play in the semantic structure of the suffix and the prefix. The part-of-speech meaning has a much greater significance in suffixes as compared to prefixes which possess it in a lesser degree. Due to it a prefix may be confined to one part of speech as, e.g., enslave, encage, unbutton or may function in more than one part of speech as, e.g., over- in overkind a, to overfeed v, overestimation n; unlike prefixes, suffixes as a rule function in any one part of speech often forming a derived stem of a different part of speech as compared with that of the base, e.g. careless a—cf. care n; suitable a—cf. suit v, etc.

Furthermore, it is necessary to point out that a suffix closely knit together with a base forms a fusion retaining less of its independence than a prefix which is as a general rule more independent semantically, cf. reading—'the act of one who reads'; 'ability to read'; and to re-read—'to read again.'

2. Prefixation

Prefixation is the formation of words by means of adding a prefix to the stem. In English it is characteristic for forming verbs. Prefixes are more independent than suffixes. Prefixes can be classified according to the nature of words in which they are used: prefixes used in notional words and prefixes used in functional words. Prefixes used in notional words are proper prefixes which are bound morphemes, e.g. un- (unhappy). Prefixes used in functional words are semi-bound morphemes because they are met in the language as words, e.g. over- (overhead) (over the

table).

The main function of prefixes in English is to change the lexical meaning of the same part of speech. But the recent research showed that about twenty-five prefixes in Modern English form one part of speech from another (bebutton, interfamily, postcollege etc).

Prefixes can be classified according to different principles:

1. Semantic classification:
 - a) prefixes of negative meaning, such as : in- (invaluable), non- (nonformals), un- (unfree) etc,
 - b) prefixes denoting repetition or reversal actions, such as: de- (decolonize), re- (revegetation), dis- (disconnect),
 - c) prefixes denoting time, space, degree relations, such as : inter- (interplanetary) , hyper- (hypertension), ex- (ex-student), pre- (pre-election), over- (overdrugging) etc.
2. Origin of prefixes:
 - a) native (Germanic), such as: un-, over-, under- etc.
 - b) Romanic, such as: in-, de-, ex-, re- etc.
 - c) Greek, such as : sym-, hyper- etc.

When we analyze such words as: adverb, accompany where we can find the root of the word (verb, company) we may treat ad-, ac- as prefixes though they were never used as prefixes to form new words in English and were borrowed from Romanic languages together with words. In such cases we can treat them as derived words. But some scientists treat them as simple words.

Another group of words with a disputable structure are such as: contain, retain, detain and conceive, receive, deceive where we can see that re-, de-, con- act as prefixes and -tain, -ceive can be understood as roots. But in English these combinations of sounds have no lexical meaning and are called pseudo-morphemes. Some scientists treat such words as simple words, others as derived ones. There are some prefixes which can be treated as root morphemes by some scientists, e.g. after- in the word afternoon. American lexicographers working on Webster dictionaries treat such words as compound words. British lexicographers treat such words as derived ones.

3. Classification of prefixes

They are described either in alphabetical order or subdivided into several classes in accordance with their origin, meaning or function and never according to the part of speech.

Prefixes may be classified on different principles. Diachronically distinction is made between prefixes of native and foreign origin. Synchronically prefixes may be classified:

- 1) according to the class of words they preferably form.

It must be noted that most of the 51 prefixes of Modern English function in more than one part of speech forming different structural and structural-semantic patterns. A small group of 5 prefixes may be referred to exclusively verb-forming (en-, be-, un-, etc.).

2) as to the type of lexical-grammatical character of the base they are added to into: a) deverbal, e. g. **rewrite**, **outstay**, **overdo**, etc.; b) denominal, e.g. **unbutton**, **detrain**, **ex-president**, etc. and c) deadjectival, e.g. **uneasy**, **biannual**

3) semantically prefixes fall into mono- and polysemantic

4) as to the generic denotational meaning there are different groups that are distinguished in linguistic literature:

a) negative prefixes, such as: **un₁-**, **non-**, **in-**, **dis₁-**, **a-**, e.g. **ungrateful** (cf. grateful), **unemployment** (cf. employment),

b) reversative or privative prefixes, such as **un₂-**, **de-**, **dis₂-**, e.g. **untie** (cf. tie), **unleash** (cf. leash), **decentralise** (cf. centralise), **disconnect** (cf. connect), etc.;

c) pejorative prefixes, such as **mis-**, **mal-**, **pseudo-**, e.g. **miscalculate** (cf. calculate), **misinform** (cf. inform), **maltreat** (cf. treat), **pseudo-classicism** (cf. classicism), **pseudo-scientific** (cf. scientific), etc.;

d) prefixes of time and order, such as **fore-**, **pre-**, **post-**, **ex-**, e.g. **foretell** (cf. tell), **foreknowledge** (cf. knowledge), **pre-war** (cf. war), **post-war** (cf. war), **post-classical** (cf. classical), **ex-president** (cf. president);

e) prefix of repetition **re-**, e.g. **rebuild** (cf. build), **re-write** (cf. write), etc;

f) locative prefixes, such as **super-**, **sub-**, **inter-**, **trans-**, e.g. **super-structure** (cf. structure), **subway** (cf. way), **inter-continental** (cf. continental), **transatlantic** (cf. Atlantic), etc. and some other groups;

5) when viewed from the angle of their stylistic reference English prefixes fall into those characterized by neutral stylistic reference and those possessing quite a definite stylistic value. There is no doubt, for instance, that prefixes like **un₁-**, **un₂-**, **out-**, **over-**, **re-**, **under-** and some others can be qualified as neutral prefixes, e.g., **unnatural**, **unknown**, **unlace**, **outnumber**, **oversee**, **resell**, **underestimate**, etc. On the other hand, one can hardly fail to perceive the literary-bookish character of such prefixes as **pseudo-**, **super-**, **ultra-**, **uni-**, **bi-** and some others, e.g. **pseudo-classical**, **superstructure**, **ultra-violet**, **unilateral**, **bifocal**, etc.

4. Suffixation. Peculiarities of some suffixes

The main function of suffixes in Modern English is to form one part of speech from another, the secondary function is to change the lexical meaning of the same part of speech. (e.g. «educate» is a verb, «educatee» is a noun, and «music» is a noun, «musicdom» is also a noun).

There are different classifications of suffixes:

1. Part-of-speech classification. Suffixes which can form different parts of speech are given here:

a) noun-forming suffixes, such as: -er (criticizer), -dom (officialdom), -ism (ageism),

b) adjective-forming suffixes, such as: -able (breathable), -less (symptomless), -ous (prestigious),

c) verb-forming suffixes, such as -ize (computerize), -ify (micrify),

- d) adverb-forming suffixes, such as: -ly (singly), -ward (tableward),
- e) numeral-forming suffixes, such as -teen (sixteen), -ty (seventy).

2. Semantic classification. Suffixes changing the lexical meaning of the stem can be subdivided into groups, e.g. noun-forming suffixes can denote:

- a) the agent of the action, e.g. -er (experimenter), -ist (taxist), -ent (student),
- b) nationality, e.g. -ian (Russian), -ese (Japanese), -ish (English),
- c) collectivity, e.g. -dom (moviedom), -ry (peasantry), -ship (readership), -ati (literati),
- d) diminutiveness, e.g. -ie (horsie), -let (booklet), -ling (gooseling), -ette (kitchenette),
- e) quality, e.g. -ness (copelessness), -ity (answerability).

3. Lexico-grammatical character of the stem. Suffixes which can be added to certain groups of stems are subdivided into:

- a) suffixes added to verbal stems, such as : -er (commuter), -ing (suffering), -able (flyable), -ment (involvement), -ation (computerization),
- b) suffixes added to noun stems, such as : -less (smogless), ful (roomful), -ism (adventurism), -ster (pollster), -nik (filmnik), -ish (childish),
- c) suffixes added to adjective stems, such as: -en (weaken), -ly (pinkly), -ish (longish), -ness (clannishness).

4. Origin of suffixes. Here we can point out the following groups:

- a) native (Germanic), such as -er,-ful, -less, -ly.
- b) Romanic, such as: -tion, -ment, -able, -eer.
- c) Greek, such as: -ist, -ism, -ize.
- d) Russian, such as -nik.

5. Productivity. Here we can point out the following groups:

- a) productive, such as : -er, -ize, --ly, -ness.
- b) semi-productive, such as : -eer, -ette, -ward.
- c) non-productive , such as : -ard (drunkard), -th (length).

Suffixes can be polysemantic, such as: -er can form nouns with the following meanings: agent, doer of the action expressed by the stem (speaker), profession, occupation (teacher), a device, a tool (transmitter). While speaking about suffixes we should also mention compound suffixes which are added to the stem at the same time, such as -ably, -ibly, (terribly, reasonably), -ation (adaptation from adapt).

There are also disputable cases whether we have a suffix or a root morpheme in the structure of a word, in such cases we call such morphemes semi-suffixes, and words with such suffixes can be classified either as derived words or as compound words, e.g. -gate (ragate), -burger (cheeseburger), -aholic (workaholic) etc.

Questions for discussion

1. Give the definition of the term “affixation”
2. What is prefixation? Give examples
3. What principles are the prefixes classified by?

4. What are the main peculiarities of suffixation?
5. Describe the native and borrowed affixes

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