

Word Building

(word formation)

1. Affixation as a basic means of forming words.
2. Composition.
3. Conversion.
4. Shortening.
5. Other ways of word formation.

Scientists usually distinguish:

- ▶ **affixation,**
- ▶ **composition,**
- ▶ **conversion,**
- ▶ **abbreviation (shortening, clipping, acronymy),**
- ▶ **back formation (disaffixation),**
- ▶ **sound interchange and distinctive change,**
- ▶ **onomatopoeia (sound imitation).**

Affixation (the addition of an affix)

is a basic means of forming words in E.

- ▶ A **prefix** is an affix attached to the front of its base.
- ▶ A **suffix** is an affix attached to the end of its base.
- ▶ An **infix** is a type of affix that occurs within a base of a word to express such notions as **tense, number, or gender***.

Affixation = suffixation + prefixation

- In Modern English, suffixation is characteristic of noun and adjective formation, while prefixation is typical of verb formation.
- Prefixes modify the lexical meaning of stems to which they are added:
usual – un*usual*; *fit* – mis*fit*.
- Suffixes don't only modify the lexical meaning of the stem, but the word itself is usually transferred to another part of speech:
care (n) – *care*less (adj).

Suffixes and prefixes may be classified along different lines.

- ▶ The logical classification of suffixes is according to their **origin**, **meaning**, **part of speech** they form, **productivity**.
- ▶ Prefixes can be classified according to their **meaning** and **origin**.

Suffixes

- (a) their origin: **Romanic** (*-age, -ment, -tion*), **Native** (*-er, -dom, -ship*), **Greek** (*-ism, -ize*), etc.;
- (b) meaning: *-er* (the agent of the action), *-ess* (feminine gender), *-ence/ance* (abstract meaning), *-ie* and *-let* (diminutiveness), *-age, -dom* (collectivity), *-an, -ese, -ian* (appurtenance), etc.;
- (c) part of speech they form: noun suffixes *-er, -ness, -ment*; adjective-forming suffixes *-ish, -ful, -less, -y*; verb-suffixes *-en, -fy*, etc.;
- (d) productivity – **productive** suffixes are *-er, -ly, -ness, -ie, -let*, **non-productive** (*-dom, -th*) and **semi-productive** (*-eer, -ward*).

Prefixes

- ▶ **negative** (unpack, non-formal, inseparable);
- ▶ denoting **repetition** or **reversative** action (decolonize, rewrite, disconnect, undo);
- ▶ denoting **time** (pre-election), **space** (interethnic) and **degree** relations (overwork) *or*
- ▶ **Germanic** (underestimate);
- ▶ **Romanic** (ex-wife);
- ▶ **Greek** (hypertext).

- ▶ Some linguists distinguish between suffixes and ***semi-suffixes*** such as ***-man*** (*postman*); ***-burger*** (*fish-burger*); ***-aholic*** (*workaholic*) – either affixed words or compound words.
- ▶ Some prefixes are treated as root morphemes because they are met as words: ***afternoon*** – ***after*** *school*; ***overhead*** – ***over*** *the wall*. American lexicographers treat such words as **compound words**, while British lexicographers regard them as **affixed words**. There are also ***semi-prefixes*** such as ***-mini*** (*mini-plane*); ***-maxi*** (*maxi-taxi*); ***-aero*** (*aerospace*); ***-eco*** (*eco menu*), etc.

- ▶ The main function of prefixes in English is to change the lexical meaning of the same part of speech. However, in ME there are prefixes that form one part of speech from another:
- ▶ *danger (n) → endanger (v),*
head (n) → behead (v),
sleep (v) → asleep (stative).
- ▶ **AFFIXATION** is a way of word formation consisting in adding an affix to the stem of a word: *sixteen, friendship, unkindly, heartless, ex-husband, etc.*