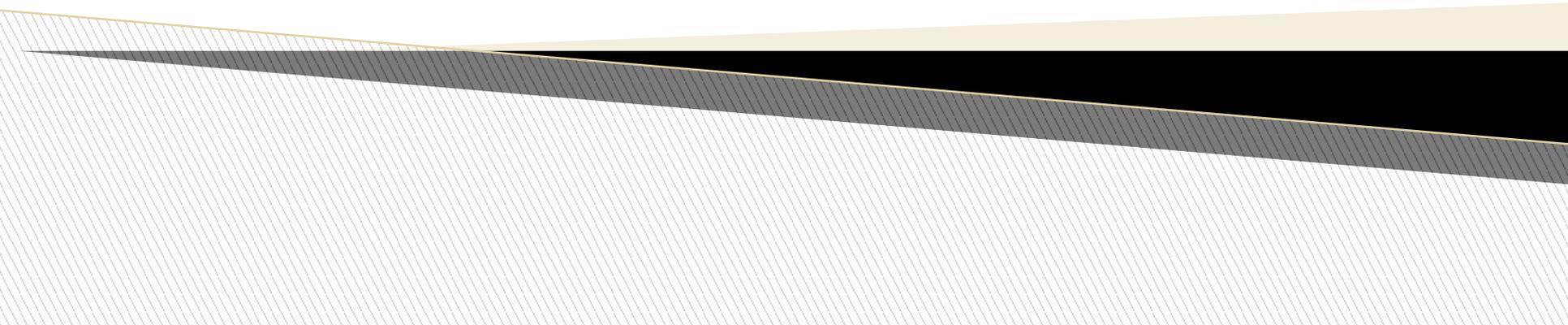


CONVERSION. COMPOSITION

Lecture 11



1. CONVERSION. VARIETIES OF CONVERSION

- ▣ **Conversion** is the way of forming words, which consists in making a new word from some existing word by changing the category of a part of speech.
- ▣ The morphemic shape of the original word remains unchanged: *love — to love; paper — to paper; brief — to brief, work — to work*; etc.
- ▣ The new word acquires a meaning, which differs from that of the original one though it can be easily associated with it.
- ▣ The converted word acquires a new paradigm and a new syntactic function (or functions), which are peculiar to its new category as a part of speech, e.g. *plant — to plant*.

Meaning, paradigm and functions of *plant* (n) – *plant* (v)

	meaning	paradigm	function(s)
<i>plant</i>	a living thing that grows in soil, has leaves and roots, and needs water and light from the sun to live, e.g. <i>a tree/bush/flower</i>	-s (plural) -‘s (possessive case) -s’ (possessive case plural)	Subject Object Predicative
<i>to plant</i>	to put trees, plants, or seeds in soil or the ground so that they will grow there, e.g. <i>I’ve planted a small apple tree in the garden.</i>	-s (3 rd person, singular) -ed (Past Indefinite, Past Participle) -ing (Present Participle, Gerund)	Predicate

Among the main varieties of conversion are:

1. **verbalization** (the formation of verbs), e.g. *to ape* (from *ape* (n));
2. **substantivation** (the formation of nouns), e.g. *a private* (from *private* adj.);
3. **adjectivation** (the formation of adjectives), e.g. *down* (adj) (from *down* (adv));
4. **adverbalization** (the formation of adverbs), e.g. *home* (adv) (from *home* (n)).

2. Synchronic Approach

Conversion pairs are distinguished by the structural identity of the root and phonetic identity of the stem of each of the two words. Synchronically we deal with pairs of words related through conversion that coexist in contemporary English, e.g.

to break - *a break* - phonetically identical, but do they have the same or identical stems?

Within the word-cluster:

- *to dress — dress — dresser — dressing — dressy*, the stem *dresser* — carries not only the lexical meaning of the root-morpheme *dress-*, but also the meaning of substantivity, the stem *dressy-* the meaning of quality, etc.
- the lexical meaning of the root-morpheme and the part-of-speech meaning of the stem — form part of the meaning of the whole word.
- It is the stem that requires a definite paradigm; e.g. the word *dresser* is a noun primarily because it has a noun-stem and not only because of the noun paradigm;

What is true of words whose root and stem do not coincide is also true of words with roots and stems that coincide:

E.g. *atom* is a noun because of the substantival character of the stem requiring the noun paradigm;

E.g. *sell* is a verb because of the verbal character of its stem requiring the verb paradigm, etc.

The stems of two words making up a conversion pair cannot be regarded as being the same or identical

The stem *hand-* of the noun *hand*, e.g. carries a substantival meaning together with the system of its meanings, such as:

- 1) the end of the arm beyond the wrist;
- 2) pointer on a watch or clock;
- 3) worker in a factory;
- 4) source of information, etc.;

The stem *hand-* of the verb *hand* has a different part-of-speech meaning, namely that of the verb, and a different system of meanings:

- 1) give or help with the hand,
- 2) pass, etc.

The stems of word-pairs related through conversion have different part-of-speech and denotational meanings.

The lexical meaning of the root-morpheme and the part-of-speech meaning of the stem within a conversion pair do not correspond:

The lexical meaning of the root-morpheme of the noun *hand* corresponds to the part-of-speech meaning of its stem: they are both of a substantival character

The lexical meaning of the root-morpheme of the verb *hand*, however, does not correspond to the part-of-speech meaning of the stem: the root-morpheme denotes an object, whereas the part-of-speech meaning of the stem is that of a process.

The same kind of non-correspondence is typical of the derived word in general.

E.g. the part-of-speech meaning of the stem *blackness* — is that of substantivity, whereas the root-morpheme *black-* denotes a quality.

The part-of-speech meaning of the stem *eatable-* (that of qualitiveness) does not correspond to the lexical meaning of the root-morpheme denoting a process.

In simple words the lexical meaning of the root corresponds to the part-of-speech meaning of the stem, cf. the two types of meaning of simple words like *black* (a), *eat* (v), *chair* (n), etc.

It is natural to regard the stem of one of the two words making up a conversion pair as being of a derivational character as well.

The essential difference between affixation and conversion is that affixation is characterised by both semantic and structural derivation, e.g. *friend* — *friendless*, *dark* — *darkness*, etc.), whereas conversion displays only semantic derivation, i.e. *hand* — *to hand*, *fall* — *to fall*, *taxi* — *to taxi*, etc.;

The difference between the two classes of words in affixation is marked both by a special derivational affix and a paradigm, whereas in conversion it is marked only by paradigmatic forms.

3. TYPICAL SEMANTIC RELATIONS

- I. Verbs converted from nouns are called **denominal verbs**. If the noun refers to some object of reality (both animate and inanimate) the converted verb may denote:
 1. action characteristic of the object: *ape* (n) — *ape* (v) — ‘imitate in a foolish way’;
 2. instrumental use of the object: *screw* (n) — *screw* (v) — ‘fasten with a screw’;
 3. acquisition or addition of the object: *fish* (n) — *fish* (v) — ‘catch or try to catch fish’;
 4. deprivation of the object: *dust* (n) — *dust* (v) — ‘remove dust from something, etc.’;
 5. location: *garage* (n) — *garage* (v) ‘to put a car in a garage’

- 2. Nouns converted from verbs are called **deverbal substantives**. The verb generally referring to an action, the converted noun may denote:
1. instance of the action, e.g. *jump (v) — jump (n)* — ‘sudden spring from the ground’;
 2. agent of the action, e.g. *help (v) — help (n)* — ‘a person who helps’; it is of interest to mention that the deverbal personal nouns denoting the doer are mostly derogatory, e.g. *bore (v) — bore (n)* — ‘a person that bores’;
 3. place of the action, e.g. *drive(v) — drive (n)* — ‘a path or road along which one drives’;
 4. object or result of the action, e.g. *peel (v) — peel (n)* — ‘the outer skin of fruit or potatoes taken off, etc

4. CRITERIA OF SEMANTIC DERIVATION IN CONVERSION

1. **The criterion of non-correspondence**
between the lexical meaning of the root-morpheme and the part-of-speech meaning of the stem in one of the two words is a conversion pair: *pen* *n* — *pen* *v*, *father* *n* — *father* *v*, etc. the noun is the name for a being or a concrete thing. The lexical meaning of the root-morpheme corresponds to the part-of-speech meaning of the stem.

There are a great many conversion pairs in which it is extremely difficult to exactly determine the semantic character of the root-morpheme, e.g. *answer* *v* — *answer* *n*; *match* *v* — *match* *n*, etc.

2. The synonymy criterion

involves a comparison of a conversion pair with analogous word-pairs making use of the synonymic sets, of which the words in question are members, e.g. *chat v — chat n; show v — show n*, etc. with analogous synonymic word-pairs like *converse — conversation; exhibit — exhibition; occupy — occupation*, etc.

It becomes obvious that the nouns *chat, show*, etc. are the derived members.

The semantic relations in the case of *chat v — chat n; show v — show n* are similar to those between *converse — conversation; exhibit — exhibition*.

The synonymy criterion is considerably restricted in its application, it may be applied only to deverbal substantives ($v > n$).

3. THE CRITERION OF DERIVATIONAL RELATIONS

- is based on derivational relations within the word-cluster of which the converted words in question are members.

If the centre of the cluster is a verb, all derived words of the first degree of derivation have suffixes generally added to a verb-base. The centre of a cluster being a noun, all the first-degree derivatives have suffixes generally added to a noun-base.

In the word-cluster *hand n — hand v — handful — handy — handed* the derived words have suffixes added to the noun-base which makes it possible to conclude that the structural and semantic centre of the whole cluster is the noun *hand*.

- Consequently, the verb *hand* is semantically derived from the noun *hand*.

4. The criterion of semantic derivation

- is based on semantic relations within conversion pair.
- The existence of relations typical of denominal verbs within a conversion pair proves that the verb is the derived member, the existence of relations typical of deverbal substantive marks the noun as the derived member.
- E.g., the semantic relations between *crowd* (n) – *crowd* (v) are perceived as those of ‘an object and an action characteristic of the object’. This fact makes it possible to conclude that the verb *crowd* is the derived member.

5. THE CRITERION OF THE FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

- According to this frequency criterion a lower frequency value testifies to the derived character of the word in question.
- According to M. West's *A General Service List of English Words*, the frequency value of following verb-noun conversion pairs in correlative meanings taken at random is estimated as follows:
 - *to answer* (V = 63%) — *answer* (N = 35%), *to help* (V = 61%) — *help* (N = 1%), *to joke* (V = 8%) — *joke* (N = 82%).
- By the frequency criterion of semantic derivation in the first two pairs the nouns (*answer* and *help*) are derived words (deverbal substantives), in the other pair the verb (*to joke*) is converted from nouns (denominal verbs).

6. THE TRANSFORMATIONAL CRITERION

The procedure of the transformational criterion helps to determine the direction of semantic derivation in conversion pairs.

By analogy with the transformation of predicative syntagmas like *The committee elected John* into the nominal syntagma *John's election by the committee* or *the committee's election of John* in which the derivational relationship of *elect* and *election* is that of a derived word (election) to its base (elect).

The possibility of transformations like *Roy loves nature* -> *Roy's love of nature* proves the derived character of the noun *love*.

Nouns cannot be regarded as derived from the corresponding verb base, e.g.

She bosses the establishment -> *her boss of the establishment*.

I skinned the rabbit -> *my skin of the rabbit*.

5. Diachronic Approach

A diachronic survey of the present-day stock of conversion pairs reveals, that not all of them have been created on the semantic patterns just referred to. Some of them arose as a result of the disappearance of inflections in the course of the historical development of the English language due to which two words of different parts of speech, e.g. a verb and a noun, coincided in pronunciation, e.g.

- ▣ *love* *n* (OE. *lufu*) — *love* *v* (OE. *lufian*);
- ▣ *work* *n* (OE. *wēōrc*) — *work* *v* (OE. *wyrca*);
- ▣ *answer* *n* (OE. *andswaru*) — *answer* *v* (OE. *Andswarian*).

The 20th century new words include a great many verbs formed by conversion:

1. *to motor* — ‘travel by car’;
2. *to phone* — ‘use the telephone’;
3. *to wire* — ‘send a telegram’;
4. *to microfilm* — ‘produce a microfilm of’;
5. *to tear-gas* — ‘to use tear-gas’;
6. *to fire-bomb* — ‘drop fire-bombs’;
7. *to spearhead* — ‘act as a spearhead for’;
8. *to blueprint* — ‘work out, outline’

Reconversion

- in the course of time the semantic structure of the base may acquire a new meaning or several meanings under the influence of the meanings of the converted word.
- The difference between **conversion** and **reconversion**: being a way of forming words conversion leads to a numerical enlargement of the English vocabulary, whereas reconversion only brings about a new meaning correlated with one of the meanings of the converted word.

Reconversion

The semantic structure of the base may acquire a new meaning or several meanings under the influence of the meanings of the converted word. Reconversion only operates with denominal verbs and deverbal nouns

SMOKE n

the visible volatile product given off by burning or smouldering substances (1000)¹ c) the act of smoke coming out into a room instead of passing up the chimney (1715)

SMOKE v

1. *intr.* to produce or give forth smoke (1000) 'c) of a room, chimney, lamp, etc.: to be smoky, to emit smoke as the result of imperfect draught or improper burning (1663)

The verb *smoke* formed in 1000 from the noun *smoke* in the corresponding meaning had acquired by 1663 another meaning by a metaphorical transfer which, in turn, gave rise to a correlative meaning of the noun *smoke* in 1715 through reconversion.

II. WORD-COMPOSITION

- ▣ **Word-composition** (or **compounding**) is the type of word-formation, in which new words are produced by combining two or more Immediate Constituents (ICs), which are both derivational bases.
- ▣ **Word-composition** is one of the productive types of word-formation in Modern English. Compound words are inseparable vocabulary units. They are formally and semantically dependent on the constituent bases and the semantic relations between them, which mirror the relations between the motivating units.

The ICs compound words represent bases of three structural types:

1. bases that coincide with morphological stems: *to day-dream, daydreamer;*
2. bases that coincide with word-forms, e.g. *wind-driven, paper-bound;*
3. bases that coincide with word-groups, e.g. *blue-eyed, long-fingered.*

The bases built on stems may be of different degrees of complexity:

1. simple, e.g. *week-end*;
2. derived, e.g. *letter-writer*, *office-management*;
3. compound, e.g. *fancy-dress-maker*, *aircraft-carrier*, etc. However, this complexity of structure of bases is not typical of the bulk of Modern English compounds.

Not to confuse compound words with polymorphic words of secondary derivation

or derivatives built according to an affixal pattern but on a compound stem for its base such as, e.g.,

school-mastership ($[n+n]+suf$),

ex-housewife ($prf+[n+n]$),

to weekend, to spotlight ($[n+n]+conversion$).

4. TYPES OF MEANING OF COMPOUND WORDS

- The meaning of a compound word is made up of two components: structural and lexical.

4.1. THE STRUCTURAL MEANING

The structural meaning of compounds is formed on the base of:

- 1) the meaning of their distributional pattern;
- 2) the meaning of their derivational pattern.

The distributional pattern of a compound

- is understood as the order and arrangement of the ICs that constitute a compound word.
- A change in the order and arrangement of the same ICs signals the compound words of different lexical meanings, cf.: *pot-flower* ('a flower that grows in a pot') and *flower-pot* ('small container used for growing flowers in').
- A change in the order arrangement of the ICs that form a compound may destroy its meaning.
- Thus, the distributional pattern of a compound carries a certain meaning of its own which is largely independent of the actual lexical meaning of their ICs.
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The meaning of the derivational pattern of compounds

- can be abstracted and described through the interrelation of their ICs. E.g. the derivational pattern **n+ven** underlying the compound adjectives *duty-bound, wind-driven, mud-stained* conveys the generalized meaning of instrumental or agentive relations which can be interpreted as 'done by' or 'with the help of something'.

Derivational patterns in compounds may be monosemantic and polysemantic.

E.G. the pattern **n+n→N** conveys the following semantic relations:

- 1) of purpose, e.g. *bookshelf*;
- 2) of resemblance, e.g. *needle-fish*;
- 3) of instrument or agent, e.g. *windmill, sunset*.

THE LEXICAL MEANING

The lexical meaning of compounds is formed on the base of the combined lexical meanings of their constituents.

The semantic centre of the compound is the lexical meaning of the second component modified and restricted by the meaning of the first.

The lexical meanings of both components are closely fused together to create a new semantic unit with a new meaning, which dominates the individual meanings of the bases, and is characterized by some additional component not found in any of the bases.

E.g. the lexical meaning of the compound word **handbag** is not essentially 'a bag designed to be carried in the hand' but 'a woman's small bag to carry everyday personal items'.

CLASSIFICATION OF COMPOUND WORDS

1. According to the relations between the ICs compound words fall into coordinative and subordinative compounds.
2. In **coordinative compounds** the two ICs are semantically equally important. The coordinative compounds fall into three groups:
 - a) reduplicative compounds which are made up by the repetition of the same base, e.g. *pooh-pooh*, *fifty-fifty*;
 - b) compounds formed by joining the phonically varied rhythmic twin forms, e.g. *chit-chat*, *zig-zag* (with the same initial consonants but different vowels); *walkie-talkie*, *clap-trap* (with different initial consonants but the same vowels);
 - c) additive compounds which are built on stems of the independently functioning words of the same part of speech, e.g. *actor-manager*, *queen-bee*.

- In **subordinative compounds** the components are neither structurally nor semantically equal in importance but are based on the domination of the head-member which is, as a rule, the second IC, e.g. *stone-deaf, age-long*.
- The second IC preconditions the part-of-speech meaning of the whole compound.

2. According to the part of speech compounds fall into:

1. compound nouns, e.g. *sunbeam*, *maidservant*;
2. compound adjectives, e.g. *heart-free*, *far-reaching*;
3. compound pronouns, e.g. *somebody*, *nothing*;
4. compound adverbs, e.g. *nowhere*, *inside*;
5. compound verbs, e.g. *to offset*, *to bypass*, *to mass-produce*.

3. According to the means of composition compound words are classified into:

1. compounds composed without connecting elements, e.g. *heartache, dog-house*;
2. compounds composed with the help of a vowel or a consonant as linking elements, e.g. *handicraft, speedometer, statesman*;
3. compounds composed with the help of linking elements represented by preposition or conjunction stems, e.g. *son-in-law, pepper-and-salt*.

4. According to the type of bases that form compounds the following classes can be singled out:

1. **compounds proper** that are formed by joining together bases built on the stems or on the word-forms with or without a linking element, e.g. *door-step, street-fighting*;
2. **derivational compounds** that are formed by joining affixes to the bases built on the word-groups or by converting the bases built on the word-groups into other parts of speech, *long-legged* → (long legs) + -ed; *a turnkey* → (to turn key) + conversion.

Derivational compounds fall into two groups:

- a) derivational compounds mainly formed with the help of suffixes *-ed* and *-er* applied to bases built, as a rule, on attributive phrases, e.g. *narrow-minded, doll-faced, lefthander*;
- b) derivational compounds formed by conversion applied to bases built, as a rule, on three types of phrases – verbal-adverbial phrases (*a breakdown*), verbal-nominal phrases (*a kill-joy*) and attributive phrases (*a sweet-tooth*).

Correlational types of compounds

Correlation embraces both the structure and the meaning of compound words.

E.g., compound nouns of the pattern **n+n** (*story-teller, watch-maker*) reflect the agentive relations proper to free phrases of the **N who V+N type** (*one who tells stories, one who makes watches*).

Correlation is a regular interaction and interdependence of compound words and certain types of free phrases, which condition the potential possibility of appearance of compound words, their structure and semantic type.

The description of compound words through the correlation with variable free phrases makes it possible to classify them into:

1. **Verbal-nominal;**
2. **Nominal;**
3. **Adjectival-nominal;**
4. **Verbal-adverbial.**

Compound adjectives proper

The compound adjective	The structural pattern	The corresponding free phrase	The structural type of the corresponding free phrase	Semantic relations between a compound adjective and its corresponding free phrase
1. snow-white	N+a	As white as snow	As+A+as+N	of resemblance
2. Two-day	Num+n	Two days	Num+N	quantitative

Derivational compounds

The compound noun	The structural pattern	The corresponding free phrase	The structural type of the corresponding free phrase	Semantic relations between a compound noun and its corresponding free phrase
1. A break-down	(V+adv)+ conversion	to break down	V+adv	of result
2. A run-away	(V+adv)+ conversion	to run away	V+adv	of result

Verbal-nominal compounds

The compound noun	The structural pattern	The corresponding free phrase	The structural type of the corresponding free phrase	Semantic relations between a compound noun and its corresponding free phrase
1. peace-fighter	N+(V+-er)	to fight for peace	V+prp+N	agentive
2. rocket-flying	N+(V+-ing)	To fly a rocket	V+N	agentive
3. wage-cut	N+(V+conversion)	To cut wages	V+N	agentive

Nominal compounds

The compound noun	The structural pattern	The corresponding free phrase	The structural type of the corresponding free phrase	Semantic relations between a compound noun and its corresponding free phrase
1. ash-tray	n2+n1	tray for ashes	N1+prp+N2	of purpose
2. country-house	n2+n1	house in the county	N1+prp+N2	of location

Derivational compound adjectives

The compound adjective	The structural pattern	The corresponding free phrase	The structural type of the corresponding free phrase	Semantic relations between a compound adjective and its corresponding free phrase
1. long-legged	(a+n)+ -ed	With long legs	With/having +A+N	possessive
2. doll-faced	(n+n)+ -ed	With the face of a doll	With+N+of +N	possessive

SOURCES OF COMPOUNDS

The actual process of building compound words may take different forms:

1. Compound words as a rule are built spontaneously according to productive distributional formulas of the given period.

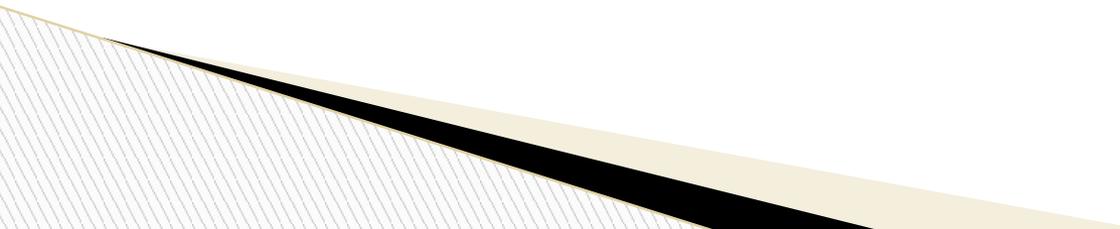
Thus at one time the process of building verbs by compounding adverbial and verbal stems was productive, and numerous compound verbs like *outgrow, offset, inlay* (adv + v), were formed.

The structure ceased to be productive and today practically no verbs are built in this way.

2. Compounds may be the result of a gradual process of semantic isolation and structural fusion of free word-groups.

Such compounds as *forget-me-not* — ‘a small plant with blue flowers’; *bull’s-eye* — ‘the centre of a target; a kind of hard, globular candy’; *mainland* — ‘a continent’ all go back to free phrases which became semantically and structurally isolated in the course of time.

The words that once made up these phrases have lost, within these particular formations, their integrity, the whole phrase has become isolated in form, specialised in meaning and thus turned into an inseparable unit — a word having acquired semantic and morphological unity.



- Most of the syntactic compound nouns of the (a+n) structure, e.g. *bluebell*, *blackboard*, *mad-doctor*, are the result of such semantic and structural isolation of free word-groups. One more example *highway* was once actually a *high way* for it was raised above the surrounding countryside for better drainage and ease of travel.
- Now we use *highway* without any idea of the original sense of the first element.

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