

LECTURE 4  
WORD STRUCTURE AND  
WORD FORMATION

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# The questions under consideration

- 1. Morpheme. Allomorph
- 2. Word Structure
- 3. Immediate Constituents Analysis
- 4. Affixation
- 5. Conversion
- 6. Word-Composition
- 6.1. Properties of compounds
- 7. Other Types of Word Formation

# Word-formation (definition)

**Word-formation** is the branch of lexicology that studies

- the **derivative structure** of existing words and
- the **patterns** on which a language builds new words.

It is a certain **principle of classification** of lexicon and

one of the main **ways of enriching the vocabulary**.



# Word-formation is studied

- synchronically

Scholars investigate the existing system of the types of word-formation

- Diachronically

Scholars investigate the history of word-formation

# 1. Morpheme. Allomorph

The smallest unit of language that carries information about meaning or function is the **morpheme**.

(Greek *morphe* "form"

+ *-eme* "the smallest distinctive unit")

# Examples of morphemes

*BUILD+ER*

*build* (with the meaning of "construct")

*-er* (which indicates that the entire word functions as a noun with the meaning "one who builds").

*HOUSE+S*


*house* (with the meaning of "dwelling")

*-s* (with the meaning "more than one")

# simple words vs complex words

- and
- boy — boy-s
- hunt — hunt-er —hunt-er-s
- act act-ive — act-iv-ate —re-act-iv-ate

Simple words cannot be divided into smaller parts. Complex words contain two or more morphemes.



# morphemes are two-facet language units

- A morpheme is a meaning and a stretch of sound joined together.
- It is the minimum meaningful language unit.




# Structure of morphemes

- free morpheme

(can be a word by itself,  
coincides with the stem or a word-form)

- bound morpheme

(must be attached to another element,  
only can be a part of a word )



## **allomorphs** (from Greek *allos* "other")

All the representatives of the given morpheme are called **allomorphs** of that morpheme.

An **allomorph** is a positional variant of that or this morpheme occurring in a specific environment.

# Examples of allomorphs

- *an orange, an accent, a car*
- *cats, dogs, judges* (the plural morpheme –s)
- *assert /assert-ion, permit/permis-sive, include/inclus-ive, electric/electric-ity, impress/impress-ion*

## 2. Word Structure

Words that can be divided have two or more parts:

- **a root**
- **affixes** (a **prefix**, a **suffix** )
- **inflection**

# Word Structure

- A root constitutes the core of the word and carries the major component of its meaning. It has more specific and definite meaning
- Affixes are morphemes that modify the meaning of the root. An affix added before the root is called a **prefix** (*un-ending*); an affix added after the root is called a **suffix** (*kind-ness*).

# Examples of word structure

- un-work-able
- govern-ment
- fright-en-ing
- re-play

A word may have one or more affixes of either kind, or several of both kinds.

# A base

- A **base** is the form to which an affix is added. In many cases, the base is also the root. In other cases, however, the base can be larger than a root.

*Blackened*

*Blacken (verbal base) +ed*

*Blacken*

*Black (not only the root for the entire word but also the base for) +en*

# suffixes vs inflections

- **Suffixes** can form a new part of speech, e.g.: beauty — *beautiful*. They can also change the meaning of the root, e.g.: black — *blackish*.
- **Inflections** are morphemes used to change grammar forms of the word, e.g.: work — works — *worked*—*working*.  
English is not a highly inflected language.



# Four structural types of words in English

- simple (root) words consist of one root morpheme and an inflexion (*boy, warm, law, tables, tenth*);
- derived words consist of one root morpheme, one or several affixes and an inflexion (*unmanageable, lawful*);
- compound words consist of two or more root morphemes and an inflexion (*boyfriend, outlaw*);
- compound-derived words consist of two or more root morphemes, one or more affixes and an inflexion (*left-handed, warm-hearted, blue-eyed*).

# Two main types of word-formation

- **word-derivation**  
(*encouragement, irresistible, worker*)

- **word-composition**  
(*blackboard, daydream, weekend*)

## Subdivided into

- Affixation
- Conversion
- Derivational  
Composition

## Subdivided into

- Derivational  
Composition

### 3. Immediate Constituents Analysis (L. Bloomfield)

- Why is it used? (to discover the derivational structure of lexical units).
- How? First we separate a free and a bound forms. At any level we obtain only two ICs.



# *Ungentlemanly*

1. *un— + gentlemanly*

2. *gentleman + -ly*

3. *gentle + man*

4. *as a result, un + (gentle + man) + ly*

## *eatable*

- The adjective *eatable* consists of two ICs *eat* + *able* and may be described as a suffixal derivative

## *uneatable*

- the adjective *uneatable* is a prefixal derivative (the two ICs are *un* + *eatable*)

# 4. Affixation

## is a basic means of forming words

### suffixation

- is characteristic of noun and adjective formation
- does not only modify the lexical meaning of the stem,
- but transfers the word to another part of speech *care (n) / care — less (adj)*.

### prefixation

- is typical of verb formation
- modifies the lexical meaning of stems
- joins the part of speech the unprefixated word belongs to, e.g. *usual /un — usual*.

# classification of suffixes

- their origin
- meaning
- part of speech they form
- productivity

## according to their origin:

- Romanic (e.g. *-age, -ment, -tion*),
- Native (*-er, -dom, -ship*),
- Greek (*-ism, -ize*), etc





according to their meaning :

- *-er* denotes the agent of the action,
- *-ess* denotes feminine gender,
- *-ence/ance* has abstract meaning,
- *-age, -dom* — collectivity



according to their part of speech  
they form :

- noun suffixes *-er, -ness, -ment*;
- adjective-forming suffixes *-ish, -ful, -less, -y*;
- verb-suffixes *-en, -fy*,

# according to their productivity :

What is productivity? It is the relative freedom with which they can combine with bases of the appropriate category

- productive suffixes are *-er, -ly, -ness, -ie, -let,*
- non-productive (*-dom, -th*)
- semi-productive (*-eer, -ward*).

# Classification of Prefixes

- their origin
- meaning
- productivity

# according to their origin:

- Native, e.g. *un-*;
- Romanic, e.g. *in-*;
- Greek, e.g. *sym-*;

# according to meaning

- negative prefixes *in-, un-, non-, a-, dis-*;  
prefixes of time and order *ex-, neo-, after-, fore-, post-, proto-*;
- prefix of repetition *re-*;
- size and degree: *hyper-, mega-, mini-, super-, sur-, ultra-, vice-*, etc



# according to productivity

What is productivity? It is the ability to make new words:

e.g. *un-* is highly productive.

## 5. Conversion (definition)

- It is a kind of word formation.
- The process of making new parts of speech without the addition of an affix.
- It is a productive way of forming words in English.
- It is sometimes called **zero derivation**.



# Examples of conversion

- *He was knocked out in the first **round**.*
- ***Round** the number off to the nearest tenth.*
- *The neighbors gathered **round** our barbecue.*
- *The moon was bright and **round**.*
- *People came from all the country **round**.*

# Conversion

Prof. Smirnitsky A. I. in his works on the English language treats conversion as a **morphological way** of forming words. Other linguists (H. Marchand, V.N. Yartseva, Yu.A. Zhluktenko, A.Y. Zagoruiko, I.V. Arnold) treat conversion as a combined **morphological and syntactic way** of word-building, as a new word appears not in isolation but in a definite environment of other words.

# The three most common types of conversion

- verbs derived from nouns (*to butter, to ship*),
- nouns derived from verbs (*a survey, a call*),
- verbs derived from adjectives (*to empty*).

# Less common types of conversion

- nouns from:
  - adjectives (*a bitter, the poor, a final*),
  - from phrases, e.g. *a down-and-out*,
- verbs from prepositions (*up the price, out* e.g. *diplomats were outed from the country; Truth will out.* - *Истина станет известной*)

# Verbs converted from nouns

- instrumental use of the object, e.g. *screw* — *to screw*, *eye* — *to eye*;
- action characteristic of the object, e.g. *ape* — *to ape*;
- acquisition: *fish* — *to fish*;
- deprivation of the object, e.g. *dust* — *to dust*

# Nouns converted from verbs

- instance of an action, e.g. *to move* — *a move*;
- word — agent of an action, e.g. *to bore* — *a bore*;
- place of an action, e.g. *to walk* — *a walk*;
- result of the action, e.g. *to cut* — *a cut*

# 6. Word-Composition

- Word-composition is the combination of two or more existing words to create a new word
- e.g. *campsite* (N+N), *bluebird* (A+N), *whitewash* (A+V), *in-laws* (P+N), *jumpsuit* (V+N).

# Word-Composition

- In most compounds the rightmost morpheme determines the category of the entire word,
- e.g. *greenhouse* is a noun because its rightmost component is a noun, *spoonfeed* is a verb because feed also belongs to this category, and
- *nationwide* is an adjective just as wide is.



# 6.1. Properties of compounds

- How can compounds in English be written? - Differently:
- as single words,
- with an intervening hyphen,
- as separate words.

# endocentric compounds

- If a compound denotes a subtype of the concept denoted by its head it is called endocentric.

Thus, *cat food* is a type of food, *sky blue* is a type of blue

*airplane, steamboat, policeman, bathtowel*

# exocentric compounds

If the meaning of the compound does not follow from the meanings of its parts it is said to be **exocentric**

e.g. *redneck* is a person and not a type of neck;

*walkman* is a type of portable radio.

# Classification of compounds according to the principle

- 1) of the parts of speech compound words represent:
- nouns: *night-gown, waterfall, looking-glass;*
- verbs: *to honeymoon, to outgrow;*
- adjectives: *peace-loving, hard-working, pennywise;*
- adverbs: *downstairs, lip-deep;*
- prepositions: *within, into, onto;*
- numerals: *thirty-seven;*

# Classification of compounds according to the principle

## 2. of the means of composition used to link the two ICs together:

- neutral — formed by joining together two stems without connecting elements (juxtaposition), e.g. *scarecrow*, *goldfish*, *crybaby*;
- morphological — components are joined by a linking element, i.e. vowels 'o' and 'i' or the consonant 's', e.g. *videophone*, *tragicomic*, *handicraft*, *craftsman*, *microchip*;
- syntactical — the components are joined by means of form-word stems, e.g. *man-of-war*, *forget-me-not*, *bread-and-butter*, *face-to-face*;

## 7. Other Types of Word Formation

- **back-formation** or **disaffixation** (*baby-sitter* — *to baby-sit*). Back-formation is a process that creates a new word by removing a real or supposed affix from another word in the language.
- **sound interchange** (*speak* — *speech*, *blood* — *bleed*), and **sound imitation** (*walkie-talkie*, *brag rags*, *to giggle*);
- **distinctive change** ('conduct — to con 'duct, 'increase — to in crease, 'subject — to subject);

# Other Types of Word Formation

**blending:** these are words that are created from parts of two already existing items, usually the first part of one and the final part of the other:

- *brunch* from breakfast and lunch,
- *smog* from smoke and *f*og
- **clipping** is a process that shortens a polysyllabic word by deleting one or more syllables: *prof* for *professor*, *burger* for *hamburger*.



# Other Types of Word Formation

**acronymy:** NATO, NASA, WAC, UNESCO.

Acronyms are formed by taking the initial letters of the words in a phrase and pronouncing them as a word. (names of organizations and in terminology).

- NASA stands for National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NA TO — North Atlantic Treaty Organization



# Other Types of Word Formation

**onomatopoeia**, i.e. formations of words from sounds that resemble those associated with the object or action to be named, or that seem suggestive of its qualities.

e.g. *hiss, buzz, meow, cock-a-doodle-doo, and cuckoo*