Exploring Affixation in English

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Abstract:

Most students do not recognize how words are morphologically formed. The objective of this subject is to explore the most frequent affixes used in English language so that the students can identify the meaning of affixes and their linguistic usage within sentences. The knowledge of the origin of morphemes is the basis on which the structure of derived words can be understood better.

Key words: affixation, English, origin of morphemes

INTRODUCTION

Most of the content words of English can change their form by adding affixes (prefixes or suffixes.) Affixes aim at showing how English words are formed by means of affixation. In other words, it is used to add an affix before, or after a word to give a new meaning or to indicate the tense of a word (Crystal, 2003: 15).

The reason behind dealing with such a subject lies on the fact that students have a serious problem in how to use vocabulary i.e. word category, for example the difference between '*able*' (adjective) and '*enable*' (en + adjective = verb) and how to use each one within the sentence structure. This means that they are not able to find the meaning of many

words even the simplest ones which will not affect the meaning of a sentence only but also its grammatical building.

Affixationary – affixes dictionary - helps students to recognize the meaning of the complex words. It is a way of knowing how to form a word and also a way to get to know the meaning and function of each form.

This topic is divided into two main parts: the first part is titled **Morphology** which discusses this science and the different terms frequently used on this topic.

The second section is titled **Affixationary** - students affixes dictionary - which consists of a list of the most common prefixes and suffixes used in English. Each word on the list is followed by a short explanation showing the meaning it brings to the lexical item to which it is affixed. And it is also illustrated with some examples just like the way it is in an ordinary dictionary.

Morphology

To get through the analysis of a word to its minimal constituent parts, there is a need to define morphology. While syntax is restricted to the arrangement of words, morphology is used for their make-up (Aitchison, 1999: 80). It is a major way to investigate the structure or form of words, their internal structure, and how they are formed is through the use of morphemes (Crystal, 2003: 301).

e.g. the word '*encouragement*' = en + courage + ment
       the word '*nationalize*' = nation + al + iz

The minimal constituents of these words are called morphemes: 'en', '*courage*', '*ment*', '*nation*', '*al*' and '*iz*', each of which cannot be minimalized any further. Hence a morpheme is 'the smallest meaningful segment in the composition of a word' (Carstairs-McCarthy, 2002: 16).

Types of Morphemes

Morphemes can either be 'free' or 'bound', another classification put them into two categories, 'bases' and 'affixes' (Stageberg, 1981: 85):

Free morphemes: a set of ordinary (nouns, verbs, adjectives…etc.) that carry the 'content' of messages we convey (Yule, 2010: 68). They are either lexical or functional.

Lexical morphemes: boy, man, car, house, tiger, yellow, book…(open class, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs).

Functional morphemes: but, when, on, because, that, the,… (closed class, conjunctions, articles, pronouns, prepositions).

A free morpheme is also called 'root' because it can stand alone like *nation* and *break* in *nationalize* and *breakable*.

Bound morphemes: a set of affixes (Bauer, 1983: 17). An affix is a morpheme that is attached to another morpheme or base. A base is the root of the word that 'has the principal meaning of the word' (Stageberg, 1981: 83). An affix occurs before or after a word, known as prefix and suffix. Bound morphemes morpheme cannot stand alone but always goes with the free morphemes:

-ed as in *cooked*

-ize as in *modernize*

- de as in *decompose*

-Prefix: an affix added at the beginning of the base:

re- as in *remake*

co- as in *corporate*

-Suffix: and affix added at the end of the base:

-er as in *employer*

-ee as in *employee*

Categories of Bound Morphemes

-*Inflectional morphemes*: these are not used to make new words in language but rather to indicate aspects of the grammatical function of a word (number, tense, comparative, possessive) (Bauer, 1983: 13). Despite not changing the part of speech and

being few in number, they are more in use. English has eight inflectional morphemes:

Noun + -'s (possessive), -s (plural)

Verb + s (3rd person singular), -ing, -ed, -en

Adjective + -est, -er

-Derivational morphemes: morphemes that are used to make new words in the language (Yule, 2010: 69). They are large in number but less in use. They change the part of speech:

good (adjective) ⟶ *goodness* (noun)

They can come at the end of the word which is normal as endings but sometimes they don't close the word, i.e., an inflectional suffix may come after them:

*treat treat**ment** treatment**s***

Sometimes a morpheme formation can be 'transparent' i.e., easily analyzable as in *breakable* [break +able] or 'opaque' i.e., hard to be analyzed as in *feet* = [foot + s] (Aitchison, 2012: 202).

Affixationary

Affixationary - affixes-dictionary - contains the most important frequently used affixes through which the students will be able to know how words are modified and the meaning of each affix addition:

Prefixes:

Prefix	Position	Meaning		Example
ante-	Before the word	in front of, before, preceding		antedate, anteroom, antecedent
anti-		opposed to, against		antisocial, antifreeze, antiparticle
auto-		relating to oneself or cars, without help		autograph, autoanalysis, automobile
audio-		relating to hearing or sound		audio-visual, audio lingual
ab-		away; from		absent, abnormal
ad-		to; toward		advance, addition
bi-		having two		bicycle, bimonthly
biblio-		relating to books		bibliography, bibliophile
be-		forming verbs	added to intransitive verbs: expressing transitive action	bemoan
			added to adjectives and nouns: expressing transitive action.	befool
			added to nouns: affect with	befog

		forming adjectives ending in -ed) having; covered with.	bejeweled
co-		forming nouns: joint; mutual; common	co-author, coeducation
		forming adjectives: jointly; mutually.	coequal
		forming verbs: together with another or others	coproduce, co-exist, cohabit
		of the complement of an angle.	cosine
col-/com- /con-/cor-		together with another or others, combine	collide, collaborate, compassion, concert
contra-		against, opposite to, contrasting	contradiction, contraflow, contraband
de-		forming verbs and their derivatives: down; away.	descend, decamp,
		added to verbs and their derivatives: denoting removal or reversal	Demilitarize, dehumanize
dis-		expressing negation	dislike
		denoting reversal or absence of an action or state	dishonor
		denoting removal of the thing specified	disorder
		expressing completeness or intensification of an unpleasant or unattractive action	discombobulate
em-		make into, cause to be	enlarge, encourage, enrich
en-		forming verbs (added to nouns): expressing entry into the specified state or location	engulf
		forming verbs (added to nouns and adjectives: expressing conversion into the specified state	encrust, ennoble
		added to verbs: in; into; on	ensnare
		within; inside	encyst
ex-		out of, prior to, outside of	explain, expense, expand
fore-		added to verbs: before, in front of, in advance	foresee, foretell
		Added to nouns: situated in front of	forehead
geo-		relating to earth	geology, geography
hetero-		opposite, different	heterosexual, heterodox
homo-		the same	homophone, homograph
hydro-		of water	hydro-electric, hydrophone
hyper-		too much, to an extreme degree	hyperinflation, hypercritical
il-		expressing negation: not	illegal
im-		expressing opposition: not	impossible
in-		Added to adjectives: not	inanimate
inter-		between, from one to another	intercity, interlace
intra-		inside	intramuscular, intramural
macro-		relatively large, extending	macrocosm, macrobiotic
mal-		not, wrong, bad	malfunction, malnutrition
matri-		of mother	matricide, matriarch, matrimony
mega-		large, one million	mega-mall, megawatt, megacycle
mid-		denoting the middle of	midway
mis-		added to verbs and their derivatives: wrong, not	mislead, misunderstanding
mono-		one, a single	monologue, monochrome, monorail
multi-		More than one, many	multiform, multitask, multifunction
neo-		new, later	neologism, neo-colonialism
non-		added to verbs to form adjectives: not	nonsense
		added to adverbs	nonuniformly
		expressing a neutral negative sense when a corresponding form beginning	nonhuman (compared with inhuman)

		with in- or un- has a special connotation	
over-		expressing: across, above, excessive, too much	overhead, overcook, overweight, overwork
patri-		expressing sound	patrimony, patricide, patriarch
phon(o)-		expressing sound	phoneme, phonograph
photo-		relating to light or photography	photograph, photometer, photo-electric
poly-		many	polychrome, polyglot, polyphony
post-		after	postgraduate, postdate, postscript
pre-		before	precooked, predict, prefabricated
pseudo-		false, fake	pseudonym, pseudo-scientific
re-		once more, again	rewrite, recover, remake, regroup
retro-		backwards, behind	retrogress, retroactive, retrograde
self-		one's self, alone	self-service, self-respect, self-made
semi-		expressing half	semi-circle
		expressing partially	semiconscious
sub-		at, to, or from a lower level or position	subcommittee, subdivide,
		somewhat; nearly; more or less.	subantarctic
		denoting a later or secondary action of the same kind.	sublet
		denoting support.	subvention
		in names of compounds containing a relatively small proportion of a component	suboxide
super-		above, beyond	superstar, superior, supernatural
tele-		of linking across distance	telephone, television, telegraph
theo-		of God	theology, theocracy
trans-		across; beyond	transport, transpose
tri-		three	trident, tricycle, tricolor, triangle, trilingual
un-		denoting negation: not	uncover, unbelievable, uncommon, unfair
under-		under	undersea
uni-		one, the same	unicorn, unilateral, unison

Suffixes:

Suffix	Position	Meaning	Example
-able/-ible	After the word	showing the quality of, that can be	eatable, treatable, forcible,
-age		activity, result of	drainage, breakage
-al		denoting verbal action	arrival, functional, mechanical
-al/ -ial		forming adjectives: having characteristics of	personal
-cide		killing	homicide, fratricide, insecticide
-dom		condition, state, domain	freedom, kingdom,
-ee		denoting the person affected directly or indirectly by the action of the formative verb	employee
		denoting a person described as or concerned with	absentee
-ed		past tense verbs	hopped, liked
-en		from adjectives: denoting the development, creation, or intensification of a state	widen

			verbs from nouns	strengthen
			made or consisting of	earthen
			resembling	golden
			as a regular inflection	spoken
			as an adjective	mistaken
			forming the plural of a few nouns	children, oxen
			forming diminutives of nouns	chicken, maiden
			forming feminine nouns	vixen
			forming abstract nouns	burden
-er/ -or			agentive, instrumental, who/that does the action comparative	receiver, helper, employer, higher
-ery			denoting a class or kind	confectionery
			denoting an occupation, a state, a condition, or behavior	archery
			denoting a place set aside for an activity or a grouping of things, animals, etc.	orangery
-ess			forming nouns: denoting female	lioness, actress, countess
-est			comparative	biggest, oldest
-ette			denoting relatively small size	kitchenette
			denoting an imitation or substitute	flannelette
			denoting female gender	suffragette
-fold			multiplied by so many parts	twofold, fivefold, tenfold
-ful		having the quality of, quantity	forming adjectives from nouns: full of	mouthful, handful
			forming adjectives from adjectives or from Latin stems with little change of sense	grateful
			forming adjectives from verbs) apt to; able to; accustomed to	forgetful
			forming nouns denoting the amount needed to fill the specified container, holder, etc.	bucketful
-gamy			Of marriage	monogamy, polygamy
-gon			Angles, corners	octagon, pentagon, decagon
-ic			having characteristics of	linguistic, semantic
-ing			denoting a verbal action, an instance of this, or its result	running, dancing
			denoting material used for or associated with a process, etc.	cladding
			forming the gerund of verbs	painting

		verb form/ present participle	forming the present participle of verbs	doing
			forming adjectives from nouns	hulking
			used especially in names of coins and fractional parts: a thing belonging to or having the quality of	farthing
-ion/ -tion/ -sion/ ation/ -ition		act, process, forming nouns		occasion, attraction, persuasion, exploration, audition
-ish		from nouns: having the qualities or characteristics of.		childish
		from adjectives		blackish
		forming verbs		establish
		of a place, or country, nationality, language		British, Spanish
-ist		denoting an adherent of a system of beliefs, principles, etc.		pianist, guitarist, socialist
		denoting a member of a profession or business activity		dentist
-ity/ -ty		forming nouns denoting quality or condition		ifinity, humility
-ive/ ative/ -itive		forming adjectives, also nouns derived from them: having a tendency towards, quality of		attractive, constructive, educative, positive
-ize		cause to be, make like, change to	make or become	fossilize
			treat in a specified way	pasteurize
			follow a specified practice	agonize
-less		from nouns: not having; without; free from		childless, priceless
		from verbs: not affected by or not carrying out the action of the verb		fathomless
-let		small, diminutive		booklet, starlet
-like		resembling, in the manner of		godlike, fishlike
-ly		having the quality of		brotherly
		occurring regularly		hourly
		forming adverbs from adjectives, chiefly denoting manner or degree		greatly
-ment		action or process	forming nouns expressing the means or result of an action	enjoyment

		forming nouns from adjectives	merriment
-ness		denoting a state, or condition	kindness, goodness
ous/-eous/ -ious		having the nature of, characterized by	courageous, courteous, cautious
-phone		of sound	megaphone, homophone
-s/ -es		more than one	book, boxes
-ward		forming adverbs: in the direction of	westward, forward
		forming adjectives: turned or tending toward	onward
-wise		forming adjectives and adverbs: in the manner of, like, as far as	clockwise, crabwise
-y		from nouns and adjectives: characterized by	happy

CONCLUSION

This study looks at the word study strategies of using word parts dictionaries. These are all intentional approaches to vocabulary learning and fit within the component of language focused learning.

This research has discussed some important features of affixation in English word formation. It provided the different possibilities for extending a word to create many other related meanings. This is helpful when a student wants to form a new word from an existing one. It also helps in understanding some new words just through affixes. All this formation is governed by a certain number of rules that one must be aware of:

-Some words can be divided into parts which still have meaning.

-Many words have meaning by themselves but some words have meaning only when used with other words.

-These word-parts that can occur only in combination must be combined in the correct way.

-Languages create new words systematically.

Also it must be focused on an important issue that some affixes may give the same meaning not otherwise like in the following example: the –in- affix indicates negativity while in this the following two words valuable and invaluable, both have the same meaning that is 'set on fire'. Such cases are very limited.

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