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Word-Formation Processes in E4PS

Affixation (or Derivation)

Definition

Derivation is a very productive process of word-formation, where one or more **affixes** are attached to a **root** in order to produce a new word known as **derived word**. This process of word-formation is also termed **affixation** for, whenever we produce a new word this way, we need to use an affix – i.e. a **prefix** (also beginning) or a **suffix** (also ending).

Usually derivation changes the part of speech of the root to which a suffix is added.

PREFIX + ROOT WORD + SUFFIX(ES)
e.g. SUPRA-NATION-AL-ITY

Classification of derivation

There are two kinds of derivation: **prefixation** and **suffixation.**

Generally speaking, <u>prefixation will lead to a meaning alteration</u> while <u>suffixation will lead to word-class change</u>.

In terms of pronunciation, in general prefixes and suffixes are **stress neutral,** but some Neo-Latin suffixes, added to a root-word, can lead to a **stress shifting.**

cóntinent ➔ continéntal

président ➔ presidéntial

cómplex ➔ compléxity

ecónomy ➔ económic

pólitics ➔ politícian

díplomat ➔ diplómacy ➔ diplomátic

N.B.: For further explanations on the effects affixes have on pronunciation, see the handout on "Pronunciation Issues in DSE".

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DIFFERENCES BETWEEN

ENDINGS (It. *desinenze*) AND SUFFIXES (It. suffissi)

As to the **number**, in contemporary English, endings are just seven:

- o nouns: standard plural noun ending (**-s/-es**);
- o verbs: third-person singular of the present simple (**-s/-es**); in regular verbs, past simple ending (**-ed**) and past participle ending (**-ed**); present participle or gerund ending (**-ing**);
- o adjectives: in short adjectives, higher degree comparative ending (**-er**) and relative superlative ending (**-est**)

Suffixes are many more, as you can read in the following lines.

As to the **purposes**, endings and suffixes perform different functions: endings serve as morphosyntactic markers (they do not change the word-class of the word they are attached to), whereas suffixes lead to a word-class change. Furthermore, an ending (mostly a standard plural noun ending) can be attached to one or more suffixes (e.g.: nation**aliti**es), but the opposite is not allowed.

As to the **pronunciation**, endings neither are stressed nor lead to a stress shifting, whereas suffixes are generally stress neutral but may lead to a stress shifting.

Affixes can be classified according to the following features:

1) in terms of position

The affixes which are added to the front part of a base are termed prefixes while those which are added to the back part of a base are termed suffixes. For example:

Prefix: un-, dis-, pre-, under-, down-, etc.

Suffix: -ment, -ness, -ance, -tion, -y, etc.

2) in terms of productivity

Some affixes are more productive such as "un-", "dis-", "-able" while some other ones are less productive, for example, "mal-" and even the dead ones such as "for-" in the word *forgive*.

3) in terms of origin

Some affixes are borrowed from other languages (mostly Latin and Greek) while some others are native – that is, Germanic – ones.

Native affixes: un-, mis-, be-, fore-, out-, over-, under-, -ness, -dom, -ship, etc.

Neo-Latin affixes:

  Latin ones: dis-, in-/im-/ir-/il, sub-, inter-, counter-, mini-, ex-, re-, post-, etc.

  Greek ones: anti-, neo-, proto-, pseudo-, hyper-, etc.

  French ones: -ee, -ese, -eer, -ique, -esque, -ette, etc.

Generally speaking, a native affix will be added to a native base. But we do have some exceptions, that is to say, the affixes and bases of different origins can be combined to form new words. For example:

Rewrite (Latin prefix "re-" plus a native base "write")

Unjust (native prefix "un-" plus an Old French base "just")

4) in terms of meaning

Since most prefixes will alter the meaning of the base they are attached to, they are usually classified into different groups in terms of their meaning alteration.

Negative prefixes: un-, non-, in-, dis-, a- etc.

Reversative prefixes: un-, de-, dis-, etc.

Pejorative prefixes: mis-, mal-, pseudo-, etc.

Degree or size prefixes: super-, out-, sub-, over-, under-, hyper-, ultra-, mini-, etc.

Attitude prefixes: co-, counter-, anti-, pro-, etc.

Time or order prefixes: fore-, pre-, post-, ex-, re-, etc.

Locative prefixes: super-, sub-, inter-, trans-, etc.

Number prefixes: mono-, bi-, di-, tri-, multi-, poly-, etc.

Miscellaneous categories: auto-, neo-, pan-, proto-, semi-, vice-, etc

5) in terms of the shift of word-class origin

Since most suffixes will change the word-class of the base they are attached to, they are often classified into different groups in terms of the shift of word-class.

However, remember there are some prefixes that can behave like suffixes, such as the prefix "en-"[1].

Denominal noun suffixes (it means that a noun is derived from another noun by adding a suffix): -hood, -ship, -let, -dom, -ist, etc.

e.g. childhood, friendship[2], booklet, kingdom, economist

Deadjective noun suffixes (it means that a noun is derived from an adjective by adding a suffix): -ness, -ity

e.g. kindness, rapidity, etc.

Deverbal noun suffixes (it means that a noun is derived from a verb by adding a suffix): -er, -ee, -ment

e.g. writer, payee, development

Deadjective verb suffixes (it means that a verb is derived from an adjective by adding a suffix): -ify, -en

e.g. simplify, widen

Deadjective verb prefix (it means that an adjective will be changed into a verb by adding a prefix): en-, be-, etc.

e.g. enlarge, becalm, etc.

Denominal adjective suffixes (it means that an adjective is derived from a noun by adding a suffix): -ful, -ish, -al, -less[3], -ic, -ical[4]

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[1] The prefix "en-" (and its variant "em-" used before the consonants "b", "m" and "p") can be most frequently added to nouns and adjectives in order to build up verbs:
- en- + able (adj) = to enable;
- em- + bed (n)= to embed;
- em- + bitter (adj)= to embitter;
- en- + danger (n) = to endanger;
- en- + large (adj) = to enlarge;
- em- + power (n) = to empower;
- en- + rich (adj) = to enrich;
- en- + shrine (n)= to enshrine.

2 The suffix "-ship" should be distinguished from the free morpheme "ship". Compare with the word spaceship, spaceship is a compound since the "ship" in the word is a free morpheme while friendship is a derived word, since the ship in the word is not a free morpheme but a suffix.

e.g. beautiful, boyish, national, hopeless, atomic, etc.

Deverbal adjective suffixes (it means that an adjective is derived from a verb by adding a suffix): -able

e.g. washable, readable, changeable, comparable, measurable, tolerable, etc.

Deadjective adverb suffixes (it means that an adverb is derived from an adjective by adding a suffix): -ly, -ward

e.g. happily, backward, etc.

Denominal adverb suffixes (it means that an adverb is derived from a noun by adding a suffix):

-wise

e.g. clockwise, etc.

Derivational paradigm

It is a word family built by adding prefixes and suffixes to a root word.

Verb: to environ

Personal Noun: environ-ment-al-ist

General Noun: environ-ment

Adjective: environ-ment-al

Adverb: environ-ment-al-ly

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[3] Please note that the suffix -less, forming adjectives, performs the same function of the negative prefixes (un-, non-, in-, dis-, a-): fearless, helpless, useless, careless, jobless, homeless, lawless, etc. The suffix –ful is its opposite, as to the meaning: fearful, helpful, useful, careful, lawful, hopeful, etc.

[4] Please pay attention to the following couples of adjectives ending in –ic/-ical:
  – economic (connected with the trade, industry and development of wealth of a country, an area or a society) vs economical (inexpensive, cheap);
  – classic (1. accepted or deserving to be accepted as one of the best or most important of its kind; 2. very typical; 3. elegant, but simple and traditional in style or design; not affected by changes in fashion) vs classical (1. widely accepted and used for a long time; traditional in style or idea; 2. connected with or influenced by the culture of ancient Greece and Rome; 3. written in a Western musical tradition, usually using an established form and not played on electronic instruments);
  – historic (important in history) vs historical (connected with the past and/or with the study of history).

Verb: to employ
Personal Noun: employ-er/employ-ee
General Noun: employ-ment
Adjective: employ-able
Adverb: ====

Verb: to manage
Personal Noun: manag-er
General Noun: manage-ment
Adjective: manage-able/manag-er-ial/manage-ment-al
Adverb: manag-er-ial-ly/manage-ment-al-ly

Verb: legal-ize
Personal Noun: ====
General Noun: legal-iz-ation
Adjective: legal
Adverb: legal-ly

N.B.: please note stress variation, i.e. stress shifting, in each of the abovementioned derivational paradigms!!