

Word Formation Processes in Political English

**** part one: conversion ****

CONVERSION (also called **ZERO-DERIVATION**) may be defined as a word-formation process by which a word, belonging to one word-class, is transferred to another word-class without any concomitant change of form.

WARNING – let's look at how the process of **derivation** (also called **affixation**¹) works:

¹ **Affixation** – also called **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 termed **affixation** for, whenever we produce a new word this way, we need to use an affix – i.e. a **prefix** (also called beginning) or a **suffix** (also called ending).

Usually, derivation by means of a suffix (most rarely a prefix) changes the part of speech of the root to which such a suffix is added. That is also why the process of word-building of conversion is referred to as "zero-derivation" – because it reaches the same goal of derivation without altering the form of the item that has undergone a change of word-class.

Generally speaking, prefixes and suffixes are **stress neutral**, but some Neo-Latin suffixes, added to a root-word, can lead to a **stress shifting**, such as in: (to) admínister → administration, átom → atomic. →→→→ For further details on the effects affixes have on pronunciation, see "Pronunciation Issues in DSE", unit "Tools", a.y. 2024/2025, pp. 13-17.

Remember we have some prefixes that can behave like suffixes, such as "en-": it (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 (**Equivalents in Italian**: "attivare, permettere a qualcuno di fare qualcosa");
 - em- + bed (n) = to embed (**Equivalent in Italian**: "inserire, incastrare");
 - em- + bitter (adj) = to embitter (**Equivalent in Italian**: "inasprire");
 - en- + danger (n) = to endanger (**Equivalent in Italian**: "mettere in pericolo/a rischio");
 - en- + large (adj) = to enlarge (**Equivalents in Italian**: "ingrandire, ampliare, allargare");
 - en- + rich (adj) = to enrich (**Equivalent in Italian**: "arricchire");
- en- + shrine (n) = to enshrine (**Equivalents in Italian**: "custodire, conservare, racchiudere, sancire").

NOUN FORMATION

We use some words only as nouns: *car, shelf, strategy*, etc. In other cases, nouns can be derived from other words, notably from verbs by adding a suffix. For example:

deliver → delivery

employ → employment

exhibit → exhibition

Some of the common noun endings are:

depart → departure

initiate → initiative

perform → performance

promote → promotion

recruit → recruitment

refer → reference

store → storage

train → training

Nouns can also be formed from adjectives or other nouns:

accurate → accuracy

capital → capitalism

effective → effectiveness

free → freedom

partner → partnership

reliable → reliability

People

Nouns referring to people can be formed with *-er, -or, -ian, -ee, -ant* and *-ist*:

lawyer

auditor

musician

employee

assistant

dentist

reporter

realtor

technician

trainee

consultant

scientist

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ADJECTIVES

FORM Many adjectives are not derived from other words:

old new high low rich poor hard soft

However, you can recognise many adjectives from their endings. The word the adjective is derived from is either a noun or a verb. Here is a list of the most common endings, together with nouns that the adjectives often combine with:

-able:	adjustable seatbelt	profitable venture	workable arrangement
-al:	professional image	international dimension	promotional literature
-ant:	important decision	pleasant meal	dominant partner
-ary:	monetary policy	supplementary benefit	voluntary redundancy
-ed:	limited company	contented customer	vested interest
-ent:	confident manner	convenient time	independent survey
-ful:	successful career	careful planning	fruitful discussion
-ial:	industrial sabotage	judicial enquiry	potential disaster
-ible:	deductible income	legible handwriting	negligible amount
-ic:	economic policy	realistic forecast	strategic acquisition
-ing:	convincing argument	leading brand	boring meeting
-ive:	competitive salary	exclusive distributor	positive outlook
-less:	endless discussion	hopeless case	useless idea
-ly:	costly mistake	quarterly statement	timely intervention
-ous:	ambitious politician	famous actor	tremendous increase
-y:	busy employee	risky venture	wealthy banker

Forming opposites

We often use prefixes such as *dis-*, *il-*, *im-*, *in-*, *ir-*, *mis-* and *un-* to say that something is *not* the case:

dis-:	dishonest	disorganised	dissatisfied
il-:	illegal	illegible	illicit
im-:	impatient	impossible	impractical
in-:	inaccurate	incompetent	informal
ir-:	irregular	irrevocable	irrecoverable
mis-:	mismanaged	misinformed	mistaken
un-:	uneconomic	unfashionable	unsuccessful

Conversion is a highly prolific source for the production of new words, since there is no restriction on the form that can undergo conversion in English.

The main kinds of conversion are

- **noun** ➔ **verb**

- verb → noun
- adjective → noun
- adjective → verb
- preposition → noun
- preposition → verb

but also adjective → adverb, adverb → conjunction,
 preposition → conjunction, interjection → noun, interjection
 → verb may occur.

EXAMPLES OF CONVERSION

1) NOUN TO VERB

- cash** → **to cash**
- evidence** → **to evidence**
- [an] **experience** → **to experience**
- [an] **eye** → **to eye**
- import** /'ɪmpɔ:t/ → **to import** /ɪm'pɔ:t/
- export** /'ekspɔ:t/ → **to export** /ɪk'spɔ:t/

<i>Verb</i>	<i>Noun</i>	<i>Verb</i>	<i>Noun</i>
con'duct	'conduct	pro'duce	'produce
dis'count	'discount	re'cord	'record
in'crease	'increase	re'ject	'reject
ob'ject	'object	sub'ject	'subject
per'mit	'permit	trans'fer	'transfer

- [a] **head** → **to head**
- [a] **network** → **to network**
- [a] **vote** → **to vote**
- [a] **veto** → **to veto**

e.g.: «A third of people in the UK have **experienced** poverty in recent years»²
 «Slovenia **eyes** a rare moment of glory»³

² *The Guardian*, May 16, 2016.

³ *The Economist*, November 6, 2006.

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Why Italy's debt matters for everybody

By **Robert J. Samuelson**

May 24, 2020 at 9:18 p.m. GMT+2

Politics & Policy

Italy Faces Yet Another Moment of Truth

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte could scupper next week's EU coronavirus talks unless he gets his way on coronabonds. But he has no real leverage.

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German Economy Heads for Worst Growth in Six Years

5

Meloni's Ship of State Is Heading for Choppy Waters

Infighting has started even before the far-right leader proposes a Cabinet.

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2) VERB TO NOUN

to call

→ [a] **call**

to control /kən'trəʊl/

→ [a] **control** /kən'trəʊl/

to cut

→ [a] **cut**

to fly

→ [a] **fly**

to issue

→ [a] **issue**

to report⁷ /rɪ'pɔ:t/

→ [a] **report** /rɪ'pɔ:t/

to opt out

→ [an] **opt-out**

to schedule

→ [a] **schedule**

⁴ www.bloomberg.com, April 15, 2020.

⁵ www.blomberg.com, April 19, 2019.

⁶ www.blomberg.com, October 10, 2022.

⁷ Such a verb, often used in its passive voice, can be considered a "false friend" – thus its equivalent in Italian is "segnalare".

to talk

→ [a] talk

... but also

attempt benefit blame budget call claim copy cost delay
help lack offer share supply support try wait walk wish

e.g.: «Italian coalition **talks** collapse»

«Eventually, opposing forces in Liberia were pushed to hold peace **talks** in Ghana»

«Conte said the government, made up of a coalition of the anti-establishment Five Star Movement and the far-right League, would need €17bn (£15bn) to fund election campaign promises including tax **cuts**, a universal basic income and pension reforms.»⁸



“ Instead of dividing people into vaccine haves and have-nots, the green pass brought us together

By Invitation | Russia and Ukraine

Talks between Russia and Ukraine would save lives, argues Christopher Chivvis

The foreign-policy expert writes as part of a series debating the wisdom of peace negotiations

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Finance & economics | Fiscal feud

Developing countries take tax talks to the UN

They want more of a say

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International | COP28 concludes

Climate talks at last lead to a deal on cutting fossil-fuel use

The historic agreement emerged only through bitter compromise

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«As of 2023, three states have formal **opt-outs** from a total of four policy areas»;

⁸ *The Guardian*, October 22, 2018.

⁹ *The Economist*, April 29, 2021.

¹⁰ *The Economist*, January 29, 2023.

¹¹ *The Economist*, December 1, 2022.

¹² *The Economist*, December 13, 2023.

Certain EU Member States have what are known as **opt-outs**, which are a means of ensuring that when a given Member State does not want to take part in a particular field of EU policy, it can opt out, thus avoiding an overall stalemate.

Examples of opt-outs include:

- Schengen Agreement: Ireland;
- economic and monetary union: Denmark;
- defence: Denmark;
- EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: Poland;
- area of freedom, security and justice: Denmark and Ireland (the latter may opt into given initiatives if it wishes).

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3) ADJECTIVE TO NOUN

executive
high
human

→ [an] **executive**
→ [a] **high**
→ **humans**¹⁴

e.g.: «The Department of Agriculture published in February projections that indicate U.S. beef, pork, and poultry producers will increase exports and gradually increase production, even though U.S. citizens' mean yearly meat consumption is expected to remain lower than previous **highs**».

Italy's public debt to hit record high in 2019 says EU

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The Economist explains

Why has the price of electricity in Europe reached record highs?

A shortage of natural gas and wind are to blame

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Finance & economics | In the nick of time

As the Nikkei 225 hits record highs, Japan's young start investing

Will more now favour domestic stocks?

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«To begin the working session on the SPS Agreement and Food Safety, I introduced the topic of food safety, noting that all diseases are products of interaction between **humans** and the environment».¹⁸

«Chief **Executive** Officer»

¹³ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/opting-out.html>

¹⁴ Mainly used in the plural form.

¹⁵ www.bloomberg.com, May 8, 2019.

¹⁶ *The Economist*, September 15, 2021.

¹⁷ *The Economist*, February 22, 2024.

¹⁸ *Symposium on Issues Confronting the World Trading System*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.wto.org/>

Science & technology | The wrong stuff

Space may be worse for humans than thought

Why going into orbit sends cells haywire

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Why executives like the office

Nov 6, 2021 ... Executives are far keener to get back to the office than other employees. Of those higher-ups who were working remotely, 75% wanted to be in the office three ...

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4) ADJECTIVE TO VERB

empty
clean
open
better
near

→ to empty
→ to clean
→ to open
→ to better
→ to near

Bloomberg the Company & Its Products | Bloomberg Terminal Demo Request | Bloomberg Anywhere Remote Login | Bloomberg Customer Support

Bloomberg

● Live TV Markets Economics Industries Tech Politics Businessweek Opinion More

Politics

As US Vote Nears, Ukraine's Allies Worry About What Comes Next

- Russia presses on across whole Ukraine frontline, Kursk region
- US aid may still wind down in case of Harris win, people say

Briefing | No place for a war

As Israel's invasion of Gaza nears, the obstacles get more daunting

It must avoid a second front, protect civilians and save hostages while fighting at close quarters

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¹⁹ *The Economist*, October 30, 2024.

²⁰ *The Economist*, November 6, 2021.

²¹ *The Economist*, October 19, 2023.

5) PREPOSITION TO NOUN

up, down ... → **ups, downs ...**
in, out ... → **ins, outs ...**

e.g.: «Every business has its **ups and downs**»;

Meet the poetry-loving banker who keeps Putin's war going

May 30, 2024 ... Tracking the ups and downs of the local currency, which is highly sensitive to global energy prices, is a national pastime in Russia. When ...

«The **ins and outs** of the problem»;
«He quickly learned the **ins and outs** of the job»;



Course

Ins-and-outs of Market Competition in the EU

Given the growing importance of these principles, and the leadership position of the EU in enforcing them, this summer school focuses on teaching the ins- and outs- of EU competition law.

Description

The principles of market competition have spread over the globe with an extreme speed. From less than 50 jurisdictions having a competition law after World War II, now we have more 150 countries who have adopted the principles of open markets and free competition. All of them have also enacted competition laws. Given the growing importance of these principles, and the leadership position of the EU in enforcing them, this summer school focuses on teaching the ins- and outs- of EU competition law.

SUMMARY

I Introduction

Eleven countries will enter the third stage of economic and monetary union on January 1, 1999. The challenge to those adopting the single currency and for those remaining outside, for the time being, will be three-fold.

For the Ins, it will, for the large countries, be a novel and, to an extent, a hazardous process during the first few years.

For the Outs, it remains to be seen if and how these Member States will develop any policy coherence of their own vis-à-vis the Ins, who will necessarily have an increasing degree of economic and monetary integration.

For both the Ins and the Outs the key unanswered question is: how EMU will work and be managed within the European Union as a whole? EMU will clearly be exposed to economic and monetary tensions because of having a number of Member States, particularly the UK as a large country, outside the single currency area.

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²² EMU: RELATIONS BETWEEN "INS" AND "OUTS", *Economic Affairs Series, ECON 106 EN (PE 167.797)* – October 1998, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/workingpapers/econ/106_en.htm

There will be no change either for the 'pre-in' or for the candidate countries.

What conditions will be imposed on the 'pre-in' countries in order for them to join the Union?

They have presented their draft resolutions on each of the five pre-ins from Central Europe.

6) PREPOSITION TO VERB

back	→	to back
down	→	to down
up	→	to up

e.g.: «We **downed** our coffees and left»;

Chinese president to visit Italy as Rome backs 'Silk Road' deal

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NATO States Back German-led Anti-Missile Shield for Europe

- At least 15 states signed a letter of intent to join the plan
- Shield to include US Patriots, German Iris-Ts systems

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«The printers are threatening to **down** tools if the pay offer is not increased to 8%».

→ → → → please browse through the OALD in order to discover the multiple changes of "back", "down", "in", "out" and "up"!

²³ AFP, March 18, 2019.

²⁴ www.bloomberg.com, October 13, 2022.

7) VERB (-ing form) TO PREPOSITION

including → **including**

«[...] Russia would reserve "the right to use nuclear weapons in the event of aggression against Russia and Belarus as a member of the [Russia-Belarus] Union State," **including** an attack in which the adversary "using conventional weapons, creates a critical threat to our sovereignty"»²⁵.

8) PREPOSITION TO CONJUNCTION

after → **after**
before → **before**
for → **for**
since → **since**

9) ADVERB TO CONJUNCTION

once → **once**

²⁵ See Reading Text no. 6, a.y. 2024/2025.