Word Formation Processes in English for Veterinary Medicine

**** 4. Affixation / Combining Form ****

PREFIX + ROOT WORD + SUFFIX(ES):
e.g. supra-nation-al-ity

◇ **DEFINITION**

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 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.

◇ **PRONUNCIATION**

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:

átom ➜ atómic
bíology ➜ biológical
cómplex ➜ compléxity
cóntinent ➜ continéntal
(to) íncubate ➜ incubátion
phýsics ➜ physícian

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For further explanations on the effects affixes have on pronunciation, see the handout on "Pronunciation Issues in DSE", pp. 13-16.

✧ **CLASSIFICATION OF DERIVATION**

There are two kinds of derivation: prefixation and suffixation. Generally speaking, prefixation will lead to a meaning alteration while suffixation will lead to word-class change.

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:

– prefixes: un-, dis-, pre-, under-, down-, etc.
– suffixes: -ment, -ness, -ance, -tion, -y, etc.

2) in terms of productivity

Some affixes, such as "un-", "dis-", "-able", are more productive; 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, etc.
– Latin ones: dis-, in-/im-/ir-/il, sub-, inter-, counter-, mini-, ex-, re-, post-, etc.
– Greek ones: anti-, neo-, proto-, pseudo-, hyper-, 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 we have some prefixes that can behave like suffixes, such as "en-"[1].

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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;
- en- + rich (adj) = to enrich;
- en- + shrine (n)= to enshrine.

- 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], internship, booklet, kingdom, scientist

- deadjective noun suffixes (it means that a noun is derived from an adjective by adding a suffix): -ness, -ity
  e.g. kindness, weakness, 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, -ic, -ical[3]
  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

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[2] The suffix "-ship" needs to 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.

[3] 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).

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 ⇦⇦ **root**
Personal Noun: environ-ment-al-ist
General Noun: environ-ment
Adjective: environ-ment-al
Adverb: environ-ment-al-ly

Verb: to vaccin-ate
Personal Noun: vaccin-at-or
General Noun: vaccine ⇦⇦ **root**
Adjective: vaccin-al
Adverb: vaccin-al-ly

Verb: to administer ⇦⇦ **root**
Personal Noun: administr-at-or
General Noun: administr-ation
Adjective: administr-able
Adverb: =====

Verb: =====
Personal Noun: chem-ist
General Noun: chem-ist-ry
Adjective: chem-ical
Adverb: chem-ical-ly

N.B. – please note the <u>stress variation</u>, i.e. the <u>stress shifting</u>, in each of the abovementioned derivational paradigms!!

Combining forms

A combining form can be either a prefix or a suffix; the difference is that, while in affixation we find prefixes and/or affixes attached to a root word, combining forms act as word roots and combine each other to form new words.

By definition, if a word part can stand alone it is NOT a combining form.

When combining forms are attached each other, we often use combining vowels, that is, single vowels, usually an "o", added to the end of a word root to make the word easier to pronounce.

The combining vowel is usually used when the combining form begins with a consonant.

✧ Examples of combining forms

- **arthr-o-scope =** an instrument to visually examine the joint;

- **arthr-itis =** inflammation of the joints;

- **bio-logy =** the study of life and living organisms;

- **cardi-o-my-o-pathy =** heart muscle disease;

- **dys-plasia =** abnormal growth of skin, bone, or other tissues;

- **gastr-ectomy =** surgical removal of the stomach;

- **gastr-o-enter-itis =** bacterial or viral infection of the stomach and intestines;

- **ovari-o-hyster-ectomy =** surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus;

- **oste-o-myel-itis =** inflammation of bone or bone marrow, usually due to infection;

- **pan-leuk-o-penia =** deficiency of all types of white blood cells.