



Word Formation in English

Baxshilloyeva Feruza

BuxDPI Xorijiy tillar fakulteti 3-bosqich talabasi

Abstract:

This article will walk you through what word formation is, the various types of word formation and the rules to be adhered to when forming words. The number of examples given will make your learning process more effective and easier.

Key words: prefixes, suffixes, compound words, conversation, clipping, blends, noun, verb, adjective

Introduction

The English language is known for its wonderful quality of the way in which words and sentences are formed and used. Formation of new words from an existing root word by adding a syllable or another word is the general process. However, there are multiple ways in which it can be done.

Word formation is classified into 4 types based on how the process of formation is carried out. They are:

- By adding prefixes
- By adding suffixes
- Converting from one word class to another
- Forming compound words

Prefixation

The term “prefix” refers to one or more alphabets added to the stem of a word, mostly to make it negative. The most commonly used prefixes include “in-“, “un-“, “dis-“, “im-“, “ir-“.

Class-changing prefixes:

- a- → asleep → Verb to Adjective
- be- → bewitch → Noun to Verb
- en- → enslave → Noun to Verb

Class-maintaining prefixes:

- in- → indefinite → Adjective to Adjective
- fore- → foreman → Noun to Noun

Suffixation

A suffix is a short syllable added at the end of a base word. The addition of suffixes usually changes the word class of the particular word. The most common suffixes include “-ment”, “-ness”, “-ity”, “-ous”, “-tion”, “-sion”, “-able”, “-ly”, “-ate”, “-er”, “-or”.

Suffixes forming Nouns

Noun from Noun: -dom → kingdom

Noun from Verb: -ee → employee

Noun from Adjective: -ce → dependence

Suffixes forming Verbs

Verb from Noun: -ify → beautify

Verb from Adjective: -en → shorten

Suffixes forming adjectives

Adjective from Noun: -al → educational

Adjective from Verb: -able → understandable

Adjective from Adjective: -ish → greenish

Suffixes forming Adverbs: -ly, -ward, and -wise.

Compounding

Compounding is two or more words joined together to form a new word.

Examples:

-Home + work → homework

-Pick +pocket → pickpocket

Types of compounds:

-Compound nouns

-Compound verbs

-Compound adjectives

Compound nouns

1. Boyfriend, hatchback → Noun+Noun
2. Cut-throat, breakfast → Verb+Noun
3. Sunshine, birth control → Noun+Verb
4. Software, fast food → Adjective+Noun
5. In-crowd, overkill → Particle+Noun
6. Drop-out, put-on → Verb+Particle

Compound Verbs

1. Carbon-copy, sky-dive → Noun+Verb
2. Fine-tune → Adjective+Verb
3. Overbook → Particle+Verb
4. Bad-mouth → Adjective+Noun

Compound Adjectives

1. Capital-intensive → Noun+Adjective
2. Coffee-table → Adjective+Adjective
3. Roll-neck → Verb+Noun
4. White-collar → Adjective+Noun

Conversation

Conversation - assigning an already existing word to a new syntactic category.

Types of Conversation:

Verb to Noun: to hit → a hit

Adjective to Noun: a final game → a final

Noun to Verb: a sign → to sign

Adjective to Verb: an empty box → to empty

Clipping

Clipping – shortening a polysyllabic word by deleting one or more syllables.

Examples:

Gasoline → Gas

Hamburger → Burger

Delicatessen → deli

Microphone → mike

Blends

Blends – similar to compounds, but parts of the words are deleted.

Examples:

Motor + hotel → Motel

Breakfast + lunch → Brunch

Wireless + Fidelity → Wi-fi

Sheep + goat → Shoat

Conclusion

As we have seen before, there are many ways to create new words.

So finally, if we take a look around, we will see a mass of new words surrounding us, brought to us both consciously by language trends and unconsciously through language change over time.

We need to do one thing: we have to follow the fundamental rules or processes of word formation.

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