

WORDFORMATION IN A NUTSHELL

Introduction to lexicology; Basic units: word, morpheme, lexeme, affix, base/root/stem, combining form; Word-formation vs. Lexical semantics;

e.g. **un-touch-able-s** (nedotknutelní, v hinduismu)

- *untouchable* = stem = the form of a word stripped of the inflectional morpheme –s
- *touch* = root = the form of a word stripped of all affixes (i.e. prefixes + suffixes)
- un- = affix, (negative) prefix = a bound morpheme
- -able (affix = derivational morpheme, suffix = a bound morpheme, class-changing V-ADJ)
- -s = an inflectional morpheme

Word-formation

1. Compounding, Subtypes: Phrase compounds, Reduplicatives; Neo-classical compounds
2. Derivation - affixation (prefixation, suffixation; Familiarity markers, diminutives)
3. Conversion / “Zero derivation”
4. Semantic change / change of meaning (metaphor, metonymy, amelioration, deterioration, etc.)
5. Shortening: Clipping, Acronyms, Alphabetisms, Backformation / back-derivation, Blending
6. Specific processes: Neologisms, Word-manufacture; Familiarity markers; Sound-words
7. Borrowing; False friends / Faux amis

MATCH the types with examples:

COMPOUNDING (composition), a **COMPOUND (WORD)** = a lexical unit consisting of more than one base and functioning both grammatically and semantically **as a single word**:

e.g. *blackbird, user-friendly, best man, small talk, boy-friend, black-and-white, scarecrow, highbrow, rattlesnake, darkroom, pickpocket, windmill, skinhead, redskin, bluebottle, windmill, teapot, forget-me-not, merry-go-round, son-in-law, a choo-choo (train), willy-nilly, zig-zag, astrology, astronaut, biochemistry, psychology, overdose*

SUFFIXATION (derivation) = putting a suffix after the base; more usually WITH a change of word-class:

e.g. *dark > darkness, bake > baker, verifiable > verify, beauty > beautiful, drink > drinkable*;

DIMINUTIVES: *droplet, kitchenette, daddy; sweetie*

PREFIXATION (derivation) = putting a prefix in front of the base, sometimes with but more usually WITHOUT a change of word-class; the main function of prefixes is **to modify the meaning of the base**

e.g. *pre-+ determine, amoral, disobey, defrost, disconnect, unpack, dysfunction, malnutrition, euphony, orthography overestimate, anti-social, extralinguistic, ex-husband, bisexual, autobiography, extraordinary*

CONVERSION (zero derivation) = a derivational process whereby an item is adapted or converted to a new word class without the addition of an affix.

e.g. *answer, fall, release*

SEMANTIC CHANGE / semantic shift / lexical change = refers to any change in the meaning(s) of a word over the course of time; e.g. *pretty*: first ‘crafty,’ then ‘well-conceived, clever,’ later ‘attractive,’ and in its adverbial use, ‘somewhat,’ as in *that’s pretty ugly*.

Includes changes such as:

1. **SPECIALIZATION** *business*: state of being busy > occupation, profession, or trade
2. **GENERALIZATION** *aisle*: passage btw the pews of a church > passage btw rows of seats
3. **TERMINIZATION** *salt, virus, benign, malignant, (data) bank*
4. **DETERMINIZATION** (*have a weight*) *complex, alibi, parameter, spectrum, psychology*
5. **AMELIORATION** *dizzy*: foolish > heights make me dizzy; *nice*: stupid > kind
6. **DETERIORATION** or **PEJORATION** *crafty*: skilful, clever > a crafty politician

7. **EUPHEMIZATION** *senior citizens, exceptional child, underprivileged children*
8. **DYSPHEMISM** *feed the worms, go belly up; a bun in the oven, knocked up;*
9. **HYPERBOLE** *to wait an eternity, fantastic dress, ecstatic reviews*
10. **LITOTES** *not bad at all*
11. **IRONY** *That's a nice way to welcome us. Indeed!*
12. **CACOPHEMISM** *you little rascal*
13. **METAPHOR** *foot of a mountain, neck of a bottle, leg of a chair*
14. **SYNESTHESIA** *steel nerves, sweet sound, hot news, sharp tongue*
15. **METONYMY** *wear a mink; buy an oil, read Orwell, Washington (= government)*
16. **SYNECDOCHE** *the whole village came, new blood*
17. **CONCRETE > ABSTRACT SHIFT** *hot potato (= unpleasant situation), hunger for adventure;*
18. **EPPONYMY** *Casanova, wellingtons*
19. **WORD ELLIPSIS** *jet plane > jet, wellington boots > wellingtons*

SHORTENING processes

1. **CLIPPING** = (an abbreviation formed by) unpredictable omission of a syllable/s
e.g. *ad, exam, lab, pub, gym, ex, hippo, zoo; phone, 'cos, roo, cello; fridge, flu, Liz, congrats (congratulations); specs, feds (federals), maths, hols (holidays)*
2. **ACRONYM** = an abbreviation formed from initial letters/syllables of two or more successive words (or parts of words)
e.g. *NATO, UFO, radar, sitcom, Amerind, SALT, DUMP, UNESCO*
3. **INITIALISM / ALPHABETISM** = an abbreviation formed from initial letters, pronounced as a sequence of letters
e.g. *VAT, c/o (in care of), FBI, HQ, RSVP, PC, LA, the UK*
4. **BACK-FORMATION = BACK-DERIVATION = DE-AFFIXATION** = creation of a new word by **dropping a suffix/prefix** from a complex form
e.g. *lazy → to laze baby-sitter > baby-sit; sculptor > sculpt; television > televise; brainwashing > brainwash; action > to act, stagmanager → stagmanage, proofreading → proofread*
5. **BLENDING** = joining the beginning of one form to the end of another; parts of 2 words are **merged** into a single word; a blend contains two elements of which at least one is a **splinter**
e.g. *smog, motel, brunch, chunnel, stagflation; decathlete, sexcapade, Nixonomics; flimmer; zebrass, slanguage, guestimate, sexpert*

LEXICAL BORROWING, LOANWORD = a word whose **form and meaning are adopted or borrowed** from another language

e.g. *garage, leitmotif, chic, tea, cockroach; bungalow, zebra, piano, tomato, bamboo*

WORD-MANUFACTURE = root creation

e.g. *Kodak, Kleenex, Semtex, googol, napalm, blurb, Coca-Cola, frug, Novocain, Nylon, paraffin, Vaseline, Xerox, Tabasco*

SOUND WORDS (onomatopoeic, echoic, etc.) e.g. *cuckoo, clip-clop, ding-a-ling, walkie-talkie, willy-nilly, hanky-panky, harum-scarum, namby-pamby, beriberi, never-never (compounds!); mutter, meow, hiss, burp; dump, swing, glimmer, crash, swish; slug slither, clip*

References:

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Peprník, J. 2003. *English Lexicology*. Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého.

TEST YOURSELF:*What are the most productive WF processes in English?*- comprises several WF processes. There are 4 main WF processes:**AFFIXATION: PREFIXATION + SUFFIXATION****CONVERSION****COMPOUNDING**+ other WF processes:**SHORTENING**

ABBREVIATION (INITIALISMS, ACRONYMY, CLIPPING)

BACK-FORMATION

BLENDING

PET NAMING (shortening + suffixation)

BORROWING**NEOLOGISMS, ROOT CREATION****SEMANTIC SHIFT** (metaphor, metonymy...)**Determine which WF processes are involved:**

extralinguistic, lie, present, ex-husband, slavery, droplet, bluish, shopaholic, photography, blackbird, heavy-handed, mail, convict, lab, NATO, RSVP, to baby-sit, sexcapade, disability, Xerox, black-and-white, pyjamas, bow-wow, Blitzkrieg, buy a Picasso, kangaroo

KEY:

extralinguistic (affixation, pre- + suff), lie (conversion), present (V. pri'zent, N 'preznt) (conversion, accompanied with change in word stress), ex-husband (prefix), slavery (suffix), droplet (diminutive suffix), bluish (pejorative suffix), shopaholic (combining form = neo-classical compound – somewhere btw. derivation and compounding), photography (CF + CF), blackbird (= kos, compounding), heavy-handed (comp. + affix), mail (conver.), convict (V. 'vikt N 'konvikt), lab (laboratory – shortening, abbrev. / clipping), NATO (shortening, abbrev. – acronym), RSVP (abbrev. – initialism), to baby-sit (shortening, back-formation / de-affixation), sexcapade (sex + escapade, shortening + compounding, 2 splinters, blending), disability (affix.: pre+ suffix), Xerox (root-creation) ['ziərox], black-and-white (copulative compound), bow-wow (= haf haf, onomatopoeic, compound), pyjamas (especially US English pajamas) – borrowing - early 19th cent.: from Urdu and Persian, from *pāy* 'leg' + *jāma* 'clothing'. Blitzkrieg (lex. borrowing), buy a Picasso (semantic shift, metonymy), kangaroo – borrowing - late 18th cent.: the name of a specific kind of kangaroo in an extinct Aboriginal language of North Queensland.