

# Ways of forming new words in a language essay



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ABSTRACT In the framework of the course Linguistics I, I am assigned to do a coursework on the subject of word formation.

An introduction and definition of the processes used for the creation of new words as well as explicit examples in more than a language are included.

Language has become an important issue all over the world today. It is a well known historical fact that all languages are constantly in a state of change. In linguistics, word formation is the creation of a new word. Word formation is sometimes contrasted with semantic change, which is a change in a single word's meaning.

The line between word formation and semantic change is sometimes a bit blurry ; what one person views as a new use of an old word, another person might view as a new word derived from an old one and identical to it in form. Word formation can also be contrasted with the formation of idiomatic expressions, though sometimes words can form from multi-word phrases. The study of the internal structure of words, and of the rules by which words are formed, is called morphology. This word comes the traditional term for the most elemental unit of grammatical form which is the morpheme (Fromkin and Rodman, R 1998). A word is not a simple sequence of morphemes but has a hierarchical structure.

In every language, there are morphological rules that determine how morphemes combine to form new words. According to Fromkin, V. and Rodman, R (1998) a word consists of one or more morphemes. Lexical content morphemes that cannot be analyzed into smaller parts are called root morphemes. When a root morpheme is combined with affix morphemes

it forms a stem. Other affixes can be added to a stem to form a more complex stem.

Some morphemes are bound in that they must be joined to other morphemes, are always parts of words and never words by themselves. Other morphemes are free in that they need not to be attached to other morphemes. For instance, free, king, bore are free morphemes while - dom (as in freedom, kingdom, boredom) is a bound morpheme. Affixes, that is prefixes, suffixes, infixes and circumfixes, are bound morphemes.

Prefixes occur before, suffixes after, infixes in the middle of, and circumfixes around stems. Lexical content or root morphemes constitute the major word classes – nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs. These are open class items because their classes are easily added to. Morphological rules of word formation are complex.

Here follows a simplistic schema of a frequent classification of morphological processes. Morphological processes Inflectional processes lexical processes Affixes derivational compounding processes other processes coinage Affixes Back formation conversion Suffixes Blending Prefixes Acronyms Eponyms (Words from names) Infixes Neologisms Borrowing Clipping (Abbreviations) (loanwords) Circumfixes Back Fore Middle Complex clipping clipping clipping clipping Inflectional morphemes are determined by the rules of syntax. They are added to complete words, whether simple monomorphemic words or complex polymorphemic words (i. e. words with more than one morpheme).

Inflectional morphemes never change the syntactic category of the word.

Some grammatical morphemes are inserted into sentences according to the

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syntactic structure. For example: In English, the past tense morpheme (-ed), is added as a suffix to a verb, and future tense morpheme (will) is inserted in a sentence according to the syntactic rules of English (Fromkin, V. and Rodman, R: 1998). Respectively, in French the present tense morphemes (-e , -es, -e, -ons, -ez, -ent) are added as ? suffix to a verb. In Greek, the present tense morphemes (-? -???, -?? , -???? , -???, -???) are added as a suffix to a verb as well.

Derivational morphological rules are rules of word formation. Derivational morphemes when added to a root or stem, a word is derived. This method of word formation reflects the wonderful creativity of language. A derived word may add additional meaning to the original word such as the negative meaning of words prefixed by -un in English. Example: comfortable meaning “ cosy” and uncomfortable which is the antonym, meaning “ not cosy”.

In French, the prefix im- gives a negative meaning to a word, as well. For example, the word possible meaning “ likely to happen” prefixed by im- (impossible) means the opposite that is “ unlikely to happen”. In Greek, if the prefix ? - is added to the word «?????» we have the word «?????» which has the opposite meaning. A derived word may also be in a different grammatical class than the underived word. When a verb in English for example is suffixed with -able the result is an adjective such as desire + able> desirable. Respectively, in French we have adore + able > adorable (adjective) and in Greek, if the verb ?????? is suffixed with -???, we have the verbal adjective ?????????.

The changes made in grammatical classes are: from Noun to adjective

English French Greek Boy + ish enfant + in ???? + ???? Verb to Noun: English

French Greek Sing + er chant + eur ??????? + ????? Adjective to Adverb:

English French Greek Exact + ly exact + ement ????? + ?? Noun to Verb

English French Greek Moral + ize moral + iser ????? + ???? Adjective to Noun

English French Greek Tall + ness grand + eur ????? o + ???? Verb to

Adjective English French Greek Creat + ive cre + atif ??????? + ???? The

other lexical process is compounding which is combining words together to

form a compound word. An endocentric compound consists of a head, i. e. the

categorical part that contains the basic meaning of the whole compound,

and modifiers, which restrict this meaning. For example, the English

compound “ doghouse” where house is the head and dog is the modifier, is

understood as a house intended for a dog. Obviously, an endocentric

compound tends to be of the same part of speech (word class) as its head.

For example: English French Greek railway chemin de fer ??????????????

Exocentric compounds do not have a head and their meaning often cannot

be transparently guessed from its constituent parts. For example, the English

compound white – collar is neither a kind of collar nor a white thing. In an

exocentric compound, the word class is determined lexically, disregarding

the class of the constituents. For example, a must – have is not a verb but a

noun. In French, compound nouns are often formed by left-hand heads with

prepositional components inserted before the modifier as in: ENGLISH

FRENCH GREEK windmill moulin a vent ?????????? A type of compound, the

verb-noun compound, is formed of a verb and its object, and in effect

transforms a simple verbal clause into a noun.

These compounds are formally invariable in plural (this is not the case for the greek language): Examples: ENGLISH FRENCH GREEK Know-nothing grille-pain ???? – ?????????????? Compounding is a common and frequent process for enlarging the vocabulary of all languages. Acronyms, initialisms and alphabetisms are abbreviations written as the initial letter or letters of words, and pronounced on the basis of this abbreviated written form. New acronyms are freely produced, particularly for names of organizations.

Acronyms pronounced as sequences of letters can be called ??

alphabetisms??. Many acronyms are pronounced as words for example radar from ?? radio detecting and ranging??. Examples: ENGLISH FRENCH GREEK U.

N for United Nations N. U for Nations Unies ?.? for ????????? ???? Clipping is the word formation process which consists in the reduction of a word to one of its parts (Marchand: 1969). This process is sometimes called abbreviations. Clipping mainly consists of the following types: 1) Back clipping 2) Fore – clipping 3) Middle clipping 4) Complex clipping. Back clipping: It is the most common type in which the beginning is retained.

The unclipped original may be either a simple or a composite. Examples: ENGLISH FRENCH GREEK Doc (doctor) tele (television) ????? (???????????) Fore clipping: Here, the final part is retained. ENGLISH FRENCH GREEK Phone (telephone) bus (autobus) ???? (?????????) Middle clipping The middle of the word is retained. Examples: ENGLISH FRENCH Flu (influenza) frigo (refrigerateur) Complex clipping: clipped forms are also used in compounds. One part of the original compound most often remains intact.

For example op art stands for optical art, in English. Sometimes both halves of a compound are clipped, as in navicert (navigation certificate) in English. Respectively, in French we have courriel (courrier électronique) for e-mail. In these cases it is difficult to know whether the resultant formation should be treated as a clipping or as a blend since the border between the two types is not always clear. According to Bauer (1993), the easiest way to draw the distinction is to say that those forms which retain compound stress are clipped compounds, whereas those that take simple word stress are not.

By this criterion midcult is a compound made of clipping. According to Marchand (1969), clippings are not coined as words belonging to the standard vocabulary of a language. They originate as terms of a special group like schools, army, police, the medical profession etc, in the intimacy of a milieu where a hint is sufficient to indicate the whole. For example, in school slang originated exam (for examination) and tick (et = credit) originated in stock-exchange slang, whereas cap (tain) is an army slang. While clipping terms of some influential groups can pass into common usage, becoming part of the standard language, clipping of a socially unimportant class or group will remain group slang.

The process of Back-Formation is the creation of a neologism by reinterpreting an earlier word as a derivation and removing apparent affixes, or more generally, by reconstructing an « original » form from any kind of derived form (including abbreviations or inflected forms). The resulting new word is called a back-formation. The simplest case is when a longer form of word pair predates what would usually be the basic form. For example, in English, the noun resurrection was borrowed from Latin and the verb

resurrect was then derived from it. We expect the suffix -ion to be added to a verb to create a noun ; when as in this case the suffix is removed from the noun to create the verb, this is a back-formation. Back-formations of borrowed terms generally do not follow the rules of the original language.

For example, antipodes, borrowed from Greek via Latin, has the apparent form of a plural noun, and is sometimes treated as such, with antipode taken to mean “ an antipodal point”. The final podes is indeed plural, meaning feet, and the corresponding singular would be transliterated as pous (foot).

However antipodes itself is a compound of anti (opposite) and podes (feet). As such, it is not a plural noun at all, and the singular antipous, if it existed at all, would mean « a substitute foot». Blending is a combination of only the beginning of one word with the end of another word. For example in English, motel from motor + hotel.

In French, Copar from Comite Parisien. Coinage is the least common way among the various ways of creating words. It refers to the invention of totally new words. Specific brand names such as Kleenex, Jell-o, Vaseline are now sometimes used as the generic name for different brands of these types of products. Some of these words were created from existing words: Kleenex from the word clean for example. In Greek the word ???????? stands for the headache pills.

In French, the brand name Carambar stands for the word caramel. Greek roots borrowed into English have also provided a means for coining new words. Thermos meaning “ hot” + metron meaning “ measure” give us thermometron. Latin, like Greek, has also provided prefixes and suffixes that



are used productively with both native and nonnative roots. The prefix *ex-* comes from Latin: *ex-husband* in English. Respectively, the prefix *hyper-* coming from Greek: *hypertension*, in French.

The suffix *-able* is also Latin, borrowed via French, and can be attached to almost any English verb. For example: *readable*, *movable* (Fromkin, V and Rodman, R: 1998). Conversion is a kind of word formation, as well.

Specifically, it is the creation of a word from an existing word without any change in form. Conversion is more productive in some languages than in others; in English it is a fairly productive process.

Often a word of one lexical category (part of speech) is converted from a word of an other lexical category. For example in English a noun can be used as a verb as in the following sentence: *He's papering the room walls*. In French, we can have the formation of a noun from another noun: *medecine* from *medecin*. Conversions from adjectives to nouns and vice versa are both very common and unnotable in English; much more remarked upon is *verbing*, the creation of a verb by converting a noun or other word.

**Borrowing or loanword:** is another process of word formation according to which linguistic elements of non-native origin are taken over and used in the language concerned. For instance, in English we have the word *cliche* which comes from French. In French, the word *pull-over* comes from English. In Greek, we extensively use the English word *computer* instead of the greek one ??????????. A neologism (from Greek ?????????? ?????????? = new, ?????????? = word ) is a word, term or phrase which has been recently

created (?? coined?? – often to apply to new concepts, to synthesize pre-existing concepts, or to make older terminology sound more contemporary.

Neologisms are especially useful in identifying inventions, new phenomena or old ideas which have taken on a new cultural context. For instance the term e-mail, as used today, would be an example of a neologism in English. Similarly, the word *courier électronique* in French and in Greek, the term ???????????? ????????????. Eponyms or Words from Names: it refers to words that derive from proper names of individuals or places. In English, for instance, the word sandwich comes from the name of the fourth Earl of Sandwich, who put his food between two slices of bread so that he could eat while he gambled. In French, the word *molieresque* comes from the name of the famous French writer Moliere.

In Greek, the word ???????????? comes from the famous ancient greek sophist ????????. EPILOGUE Speakers of a language may know tens of thousands of words. Dictionaries include hundreds of thousands of words, all of which are known by some speakers of the language. But no dictionary can list all possible words since it is possible to add to the vocabulary of a language in many ways. There are always gaps in the lexicon-words that are not in the dictionary but that can be added.

Some gaps are due to the fact that possible combinations or morphemes have not been made. There are morphological rules in every language that determine how morphemes combine to form new words. According to the analysis made in this assignment, morphological processes consist of inflectional and lexical process. In turn, lexical processes include derivational

processes (by adding all kind of affixes ) and other processes such as Back-formation, Acronyms, Borrowing, Clipping, Eponyms, Blending, Conversion, Coinage, Neologisms and Compounding. All these word formation processes result in the richness of the vocabulary of a language.

Speakers of a language can easily learn how to analyze a word of their language into its component morphemes, since their mental grammars include a mental lexicon of morphemes and the morphological rules for their combination. However this is not very easy for a learner of a language.

Learning the morphological processes of language can be of great help for someone who learns it. REFERENCES Bauer, Laurie (1983). English Word – Formation Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press Fromkin, V. and Rodman, R.

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