

WORDS AND WORDS FORMATION PROCESSES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Shehu Ibrahim Yarkofoji

shehucrm14@gmail.com

Abdu Gusau Polytechnic, Talata Mafara, Zamfara State

ABSTRACT

Morphology refers to system of meaningful units in language. The smallest unit is a morpheme. Hence, this paper is concerned with words and words formation processes paying close attention to affixation and other means by which words are formed. For a better understanding, definitions are given to each key process of word formation process. A conclusion was drawn by recapitulating the main point of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

Whenever a study or a comment is made on words and words formation process, morphology as a system of meaningful units in a language should be considered. Morphology is concerned with spelling and word construction or word formation. It determines the prevailing syllables, in words and the meaning of such syllabic changes ascribed to words (Nzeribe 2003)

Words in English or in any language are of varied lengths and structure. It is easy to recognize a word on a printed page because of the tiny space that are left in between words. It is also possible to describe a word according to:

- i. The number of its components syllables
- ii. The number of its meaningful parts

A syllable is a phonological unit while a morpheme is a grammatical unit and is often described as the smallest meaningful grammatical unit. The morpheme is often described as the smallest meaningful grammatical unit.

It should be noted here that meaning is very significant in the identification of a morpheme. The bound morpheme is usually an affix which is added to a free morpheme or combines with another bound morpheme to form a complex word.

Notice that the addition of some affixes to base forms in English is recursive. For example, in the word “demaginalization”, there are three affixes apprehend to the base form magnet. Three terms are significant because of the existence of a strict order in word-formation. These are the root, the stem, and the affix in words.

Roots, Stems and Affixes

The root of the word is the core of the word. It is the part of the word that remains after the removal of all affixes. The stem, on the other hand is that part of the word that remain after all inflectional affixes have been removed. Affixes word elements attached to words may either proceed as prefixes (do, undo, doer, way, subway) affixes can be grouped into additive, replacing and zero affixes. Suffixes can further be grouped into additive, derivational and inflectional suffixes. Almost always prefixes and suffixes are additive morphemes. They are simply added to the roots



and stems of words. Replacive and zero morphemes are not as common as additives. They exist mainly as regular verbs in English. (The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English).

What is word?

A word is the smallest free form in a particular language. Free form is an element that can occur in isolation and/or whose position with respect to neighboring element is not entirely fixed.

Example: the tourists arrived. The – s cannot be a word (a free form) since it must always be attached to the end of a noun.

What is Morpheme?

A morpheme is the smallest unit of language that carries information about the meaning or function. A word is made up of one or more than one morpheme and it has the structure (p) (b)(s) where P prefix; b is the base, and S is the suffix. B is the main and the only obligatory part of the word. P and S are optional and this fact is indicated with the bracket.

The word “instructor” has two morphemes: instruct (with the meaning of teaching) and – er (which indicates that the entire word functions as a noun with the meaning of ‘one who teaches’) Morphological parts are distinct in many words in English as you can see in the following examples.

- i. Equipment: equip (main part that is a base a verb); ment (a noun forming morpheme, a suffix).
- ii. Engineer: engine (main part that base, a noun); -er (noun- forming morpheme, a suffix).

Free & Bound Morpheme

Adebya (1987) opines that from the discretion of morphemes that they are the main part words while others are just additions joint to the main parts some morphemes are the main parts. In English we have free & bound morphemes

Free Morpheme are the ones that are words by themselves. Instruct is a free morpheme. They can be used as a whole word. A single word morpheme is called a base form. Examples soil, grain, screw measure, etc.

Bound Morpheme are the ones that must be attached to other elements to make a word. The bound morpheme is usually an affix which is added to a free morpheme or combined with another bound morpheme to form a complex word.

-er is an example of teach-teacher

-un is an example of unsaturated-saturate.

Allomorphs are the variant forms of a morpheme. The indefinite articles a & an are allomorphs.

Coinage: Carriage is the least common process through which new words are created. Words here are created from scratch with the help of computers. This process is common in cases where



industry looks for a new and attractive name of a product. Think of Kleenex, aspirin, nylon, zipper, Teflon, Xerox, Kudo, Sobo, Dudu, Microsoft, tangraho. Kodak. In other words coinage allows for invention of totally new terms. The term might have been originally invented trademarks but now become everyday words.

Borrowing: Barrowing is a common source of new words. It is the adoption of words from one language into another. English alcohol comes from the Arabic word. One more? What about burrito from Spanish? Nataallah (2004) says that Word borrowing is one of the few ways languages increase their vocabulary contents as to meet the challenging needs of every day usage. Noteworthy about borrowing is that at times certain words are deliberately borrowed to supplement others even if such words have corresponding representatives in the borrowed language. For example the word laulawal (bicycle) has been replaced into a borrowed word keke or basukuri from Yoruba and English *p.62*”

Compounding: It is simply the process of joining two separate words to create a new word. More specifically, it is the combination of two lexical categories (N, Adj., V or preposition) to create large words. We need some more explanation here. Some words may be up to two or more morphemes. Some words are joining with a hyphen. Examples steam-, air-ticket, table-cloth etc

N+N	Adj.+N	V+N	Preposition +N	Preposition + preposition
Streethigh text book, light, wallpaper	Bluebird	Swear word	Overload	Into
Composite	Happy hour	Washcloth	Outhouse	Onto
Bookcase	High chair	Scrub lady	In-group	

Green house: The head defines the lexical category of the new word. Greenhouse is a noun because the head house is a noun.

Blending: According to Adekunbi (2002) blending is the process of combining two separate forms to produce a single new term. Typically, the beginning of one word is joined to the end of the other word. It is the process of taking only the beginning of one word and attaching it to the end of another word. How can we forget words like (smog + fog), brunch (breakfast + lunch) telecast (television + broadcast) motel, (motor + hotel). The encyclopedia Britannia (1974) gives samples of blending which it refers to as back formation being the analogical creation of new words from an existing word assumed to be its derivative examples; (i) to “edit” (verb) has been formed from the noun “editor” (ii) actor (noun) from the verb to act similarly the verbs automate, bulldoze, escalate, commute, escalate and televise are back formed from nouns, automation, bulldozer,



commuter, escalation and television. Other examples fall under abbreviations of some fashionable words for instance = lab, sub, exam, teach etc.

A combination of blending & compounding: More recently, words such as Medicare, and workaholic are used. It is not easy to decide whether they are the product of compounding or blending. However, when a word is made up of two or more free morpheme it is called a compound word in English. Examples airlift, crankshaft, tapeworm, roadblock etc.

Clipping: It is the process of reducing a word by taking part of it to make it smaller. This happens mostly with words with more than one syllable. Some of the most clipped words are names like liz and rob. Prof, doc, ad. Auto, fax and zoo are all examples.

Back Formation: It is another reduction process whereby a real or supposed affix is removed from a word. “Resurrect” is formed from resurrection. Housekeep, enthuse, and donate are all examples. A major source of words that belong to this category has been words that end with -er or -or.

Conversion: It is a process that assigns an already existing word to a new syntactic category. You may hear someone saying “this is a must!” “that was not a bad guess!” take the printout to the editor!”

V derived from N
Butter (the bread)
Ship (the package)
Button (the shirt)
V derived from A
Dirty (a shirt)s
Empty (the box)
Dry (the clothes)

N derived from V
(a building) permit
(a new) survey
(a long) walk

Acronyms: Words formed from the initial letters of a set of other words. Examples NATO (North Atlantic treaty organization) acronyms are made up of the initial letters of a set of word (Collins English dictionary 1998) other example given as acronyms

- FRSCN – Federal Road Softy Commission
- PHCN – Power Holding Company
- NNPC – Nigeria National Petroleum Cooperation
- MSS – Muslim Student Association

Derivation: Derivation forms a word with a meaning and/or category distinct from that of its base through the addition of an affix. The affix can be a prefix (in – un- pre-, and mis-), s suffix (-able, -ize and -ful), and an infix. A word root can have both derivational and inflectional affixes added



to it as injections where inject is the root ion is a noun forming derivational suffix and –S is an inflectional suffix.

- | | | |
|----------------|----------|-----------|
| i – age | Spill | spillage |
| ii – once..... | allow | allowance |
| iii – or | Insulate | insulator |

Nouns derived from adjectives

Adjectives

Nouns

- | | | | |
|------|---------------|-----------|-------------|
| i. | – hood | Child | childhood |
| ii. | – cence | Adult | Adolescence |
| iii. | – ism | metabolic | metabolism |

Reduplication: It is a process of forming new words by doubling all or part of a morpheme.

Example from Indonesia/Hausa

Singular

Plural

- | | |
|---------------|--------------------|
| Ruman ‘house’ | Rumahrumah ‘house’ |
| Ibu ‘mother’ | Ibuibu ‘mothers’ |
| Lalat ‘life’ | lalatlalat ‘flies’ |

Example from Hausa

Singular

Plural

- | | |
|----------------|--------------------|
| Gida ‘House’ | Gidaje ‘Houses’ |
| Rumfa ‘Canopy’ | Rumfuna ‘Canopies’ |
| Gado ‘Bed’ | Gadaje ‘Beds’ |
| Gona ‘Farm’ | Gonaki ‘Farms’ |

Alteration: It is a Process of forming a word using morpheme – internal modification Example from English: vowel changes some information of plurals e.g. man/men, woman/women, goose/geese, fort/feet, radius/radial, bacterium/bacteria, etc.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, the emphases have been on words formation processes. Morpheme has a significant role in any language variety and this is especially true of English words. New dictionaries and inventions are characteristics of language, science and technology and these has to be labeled, named or described. These new words and expressions enter the words formation processes relied on foreign words, combining forms and affixation. Beside it has been observed that no single language is self sufficient in vocabulary, hence the need to borrow words from other languages to enrich its vocabulary.



REFERENCES

- Aitchison, L. (2003). *Language change: process or decay?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bradbery, J., Deuter, M., & Tumbull, J. (2010). *The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of Current English.*
- Collins, T. (1998). Collins English Dictionary
- Crystal, D. (2003). *The Cambridge encyclopedia of language* New York Cambridge press.
- Finegan, E. (2007). *Language: Its structure and use.* Boston, Thomson Wadsworth
- Yule, G. (2006). *The study of language.* Cambridge University Press

