



Università di Cagliari

Corso di Laurea in
Lingua e Comunicazione
Lingua Inglese 1
(I anno)
Modern English and
Word Formation

Luisanna Fodde

a.a. 2020/2021



English Morphology- Word Languages

English is not an inflecting language. It is analytic, or relatively uninflected. *

During the course of thousands of years, English words have been slowly simplified from the inflected variable forms found in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Russian, and German (synthetic/inflected languages), toward invariable forms.

**To inflect means to bend, to change tone, to alter a word by grammatical inflection.*

Modern English

Simplicity of inflection



In English only nouns, pronouns, and verbs are inflected. Adjectives have no inflections, aside from the determiners "this, these" and "that, those." English is the only European language to employ uninflected adjectives:

"the tall man," "the tall woman,"

Spanish: el hombre alto and la mujer alta;

Italian, la donna alta, l'uomo alto.

Modern English

Simplicity of inflection



As for verbs, if the Modern English word *ride* is compared with the corresponding words in Old English and Modern German, it will be found that English now has only five forms (*ride, rides, rode, riding, ridden*), whereas Old English *ridan* had 13, and Modern German *reiten* has 16 forms.

MODERN ENGLISH

In addition to this simplicity of inflections, English has two other basic characteristics: flexibility of function and openness of vocabulary.

Flexibility of function has grown over the last five centuries as a consequence of the loss of inflections. Words formerly distinguished as nouns or verbs by differences in their forms are now often used as both nouns and verbs.

One can speak, for example, of "planning a table" or "tabling a plan," "booking a place" or "placing a book," "lifting a thumb" or "thumbing a lift."

MODERN ENGLISH



Flexibility of function:

Look at the example of the word ROUND which has 5 uses:

Adjective.....

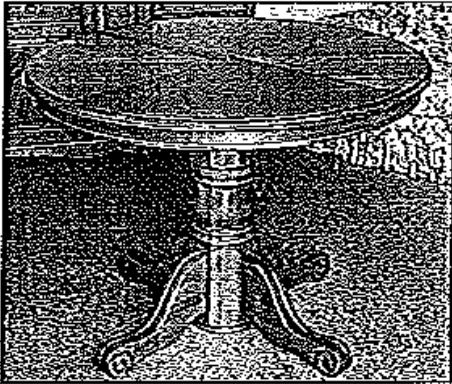
Noun

Verb

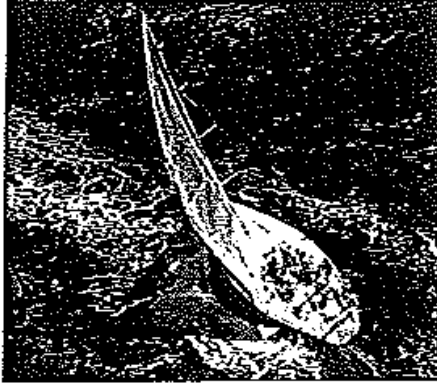
Adverb

And preposition.....

MODERN ENGLISH



A round table.



The yacht rounded the buoy.



It's your round.



Round the corner came a fire engine.

Walking round to the shops.

MODERN ENGLISH

Openness of vocabulary

Openness of vocabulary implies both free admission of words from other languages and the ready creation of compounds and derivatives.

English ***adopts*** (without change) or ***adapts*** (with slight change) any word really needed to name some new object or to denote some new process. Like French, Spanish, and Russian, English frequently forms scientific terms from Classical Greek word elements.

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

The English language has 3 different processes of lexical innovation: Internal, external and mixed.

The internal process of lexical innovation or word formation includes:

Derivation

Prefixation

DIS-OBEY

Conversion

Suffixation

KIND-NESS³.

INCREASE (v+n)

Compounding

DATABASE

Backformation

BABYSIT

Abbreviation

acronyms, clippings and blending

NATO, BBC, AD, BRUNCH

Eponimy

SCOTTEX

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Derivation

Prefixation

DIS-OBEY

Suffixation

KIND-NESS

Many words in English have a recognisable internal structure.

UNSUCCESSFUL can be broken down into 3 parts:

un.-success-ful

The first part is the *prefix*, the second part is a complete word in itself, the *base*, the last part is the *suffix*.

Prefixes and suffixes are added to existing words to create new items of vocabulary, i.e. new words.

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Compounding:

Two previously existing words (bases or roots) are linked together to meet a new lexical need and thus make a new word.

Unlike derivation, where a base is joined to an affix, Compounding is made by two independent bases.

BLACK + BOARD

HELPLINE

UNDER + GROUND

KEYBOARD

BOOK + SHELF

LIFESTYLE

HEAD+ACHE

CHAIRPERSON

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Conversion: INCREASE (n.+v.)

Conversion occurs when we have a change of word class without modifying the structure of the word itself (without adding any affixes).

It is also called ZERO DERIVATION:

To swim - *a swim*; bitter (adj) – *a bitter* (n.) Has been – *a has-been* (from syntagm to noun) If, but – *too many ifs and buts* (conj. to noun) A bottle – *to bottle*; dirty (adj) – *to dirty* (v.) Up – *to up and do it* (prep. To verb)

Brick – a brick wall (noun to adj.)

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes



Backformation: *Babysit* (from babysitter)

Words (usually verbs) formed by removing from a noun what is thought to be a suffix, and adding a verb ending.

Basically it is the opposite of what we do when we add an affix to obtain a derived word.

Emotion

emote

Enthusiasm

enthuse

Liaison

liaise

Priority

prioritise

Television

televise

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Abbreviations: Acronyms, blending, clippings

Acronyms are formed by the initial letters or syllables of two or more words.

They can be dotted or not.

NATO, AIDS, DOS, FAQ, laser, radar.

Abbreviations are also considered those acronyms which, unlike acronyms, are spoken by spelling out each letter:

ATM, DNA, BBC, VIP, IT, PC, WWW, WWF.....

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Abbreviations: Acronyms, blending, clippings

Blendings are similar to compounding, except that only parts of existing words are combined to create a word:

Edutainment, smog, brunch, netiquette,
heliport, docusoap, biopic, sci-fi, simulcast,
motel

Blends



camcorder (camera + recorder) clash (clap + crash) cosmeceutical (cosmetic + pharmaceutical) ; docudrama (documentary + drama) electrocute (electricity + execute); emoticon (emote + icon) faction (fact + fiction); fanzine (fan + magazine) flirtationship (flirting + relationship) glimmer (gleam + shimmer) Globish (global + English); infotainment (information + entertainment) moped (motor + pedal); pornacopia (pornography + cornucopia) pulsar (pulse + quasar); sexcapade (sex + escapade) ; sexploitation (sex + exploitation) sitcom (situation + comedy) slanguage (slang + language) smash (smack + mash) sportscast (sports + broadcast) stagflation (stagnation + inflation) staycation (stay home + vacation) telegenic (television + photogenic) textpectation (text message + expectation) workaholic (work + alcohol)

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

Internal processes

Abbreviations: Acronyms, blending, clippings

Clipping is a type of abbreviation in which one or more syllables are omitted or 'clipped' from a word. Generally, the beginning of the word is retained:

Ad (also advert); demo (demonstration);
lab (laboratory); movie (moving picture);
memo (memorandum); fridge (refrigerator);
flu (influenza); fax (facsimile);
decaff –decaf- (decaffeinated coffee)

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

External processes



Adoption of loan words from other languages.

Although the English language appears to be nowadays more a lexical 'lender' than a 'borrower', the acquisition of foreign words has never stopped throughout its history.

Borrowing from other world languages is still considered as a very fruitful lexical process

External processes:

Borrowing between languages

The practice of taking a word from a foreign language and introducing it into another is called '**borrowing**' and the words thus 'borrowed' are known as **Loan Words**.

It is worth mentioning from the outset that, as David Crystal observed in *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language* (CUP, 1997, p332), no language ever took a word from another language with the intention of one day returning it, and such words are never returned, even once they have overstayed their welcome in the borrowing language.

It is also important to understand that this is not a modern phenomenon brought about by globalization but has always taken place whenever different language communities come into contact with each other.

External processes:

Borrowing between languages

Words are often taken from other languages **to fill lexical gaps** - to provide **names for new objects or phenomena**. Thus, *window* was 'borrowed' by English from Old Norse via Danish in around 1200.

But borrowed words also often **compete with existing words** in the borrowing language as different foreign languages come into and out of fashion, as the French language has in England over the centuries. This is why English has both *cookery* and *cuisine*, *friendly* and *amiable*, *help* and *aid*.

Some loan words **keep their foreign appearance**, like the French *bon vivant* in English, while **others are adapted to the orthography and pronunciation** of the host language, like *battery* from Old French *batterie*.

Another type **are translated directly** into the host language, creating **loan translations** or **calques**. This is how *honeymoon* became *lune de miel* in French.

Curiously, having borrowed *weekend* at the beginning of the 20th century, French now attempts to avoid the Anglicism rather half-heartedly, by using the loan translation *fin de semaine*.

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

External processes



The English language has borrowed words from over 350 world languages.

Besides some toponyms of **Celtic origin** (Thames, Avon, Denver, London), most terms which form the English language are of:

Greek and Latin origin (*wine, wall, monk, minister, bishop, church, priest, school*)

Scandinavian (pronouns *they, them, their*, and *dirt, egg, kid, leg, skin, sky, window*)

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

External processes



Words of French origin

Administration: *authority, bailiff, chancellor*

Law: *arrest, prison, summons*

Religion: *friar, prayer, virtue*

Military life: *ambush, lieutenant, spy*

Food: *appetite, grape, sugar*

Fashion: *dress, pearl, wardrobe*

Entertainment and art: *art, beauty, tournament*

Knowledge & Science: *anatomy, medicine, study*

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

External processes



Words from other languages to a minor extent

Italian: *balcony, ciao, concerto, falsetto, fiasco, giraffe, mafia, opera, spaghetti, pizza, violin*

Spanish: *banana, bonanza, cannibal, cork, guitar, hacienda, hammock, mosquito, sombrero*

Dutch: *bluff, cruise, easel, landscape*

German: *hamburger, kindergarden, lager, waltz, sauerkraut*

WORD FORMATION - LEXICAL INNOVATION

External processes

Doublets and Triplets

Terms with the same meaning to protect the dual or triple origin of the words

Pig-pork, cow/ox-beef, sheep-mutton, calf-veal

To mark the semantic distinction between the animal – alive – and its cooked version;

PLACE- PLAZA – PIAZZA

CAPTAIN-CHIEF-CHEF

ASK – QUESTION –INTERROGATE

kingly, royal, regal; rise, mount, ascend;

MODERN ENGLISH

Lexical borrowings/ loan words

Free admission: voyage, calumet, prairie, coyote, cafeteria, canyon, marina, boss, kiosk (no change); criterion -a; pizza; spaghetti; pasta, pesto.

Ready creation: e-mail, e-commerce, spam, database; underground

Adaptations (with slight change): Physics; Philosophy; parliament; urban....

MODERN ENGLISH

Lexical borrowings

Consequences

The admission of words from various world languages has consequently increased the number of words denoting the same meaning.

Such enormous admission of loan words helps to understand why the English language is one of the richest idioms in the world – from a lexical point of view.

**FAMOUS, WELL-KNOWN, DISTINGUISHED,
EMINENT, NOTORIOUS, INFAMOUS**

ROYAL, REGAL, SOVEREIGN, KINGLY

MODERN ENGLISH

These days, however, English, and especially the US varieties of English, has become **far more of a lender than a borrower.**

English has become a word lender

When it comes to borrowing words, **linguistic receptiveness tends to go hand in hand with cultural receptiveness** and this has certainly been the case in the history of English as a word lender.

As a lender, English was **a late starter**. There is very little evidence of English influencing the languages of even its closest neighbours before **the beginning of the 18th century**. It was at this time that France, closely followed by Italy and then by other European nations, **developed an enthusiasm for all things English**, and this included words. A huge number of English loan words entered French and, directly or indirectly, via French, the other languages of Europe.

MODERN ENGLISH

In the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st, **globalization and the level of contact between countries** has meant that **English words have spread more widely and in greater number than ever before.**

This is largely due to the cultural and political **predominance of the USA**, in particular.

These days, English words enter the languages of countries worldwide through **pop and youth culture, technology (in particular, computers and the Internet), the media and advertising, among other channels.**

Governments all over the world, and particularly in South East Asia, have complained that **there isn't time to translate these English words into the local language** and so a **hybrid of English** and the local language develops, often referred to as 'Tinglish' (Thai and English) or 'Chinglish' (Chinese and English) for example.

Borrowing can even lead to **loan words outnumbering indigenous words**, as they do in Korea (which borrows heavily from Chinese and English in particular) by an estimated ratio of 60% to 40%.

MODERN ENGLISH

English loan words as False Friends

With English words being so avidly and speedily absorbed into foreign languages either out of necessity or at the whim of fashion, and with **borrowing being the free and ungoverned process** it has always tended to be, **interpretations of meaning are often quite mistaken** or quite deliberately disregarded.

The important thing, it seems, in very many cases, **is not what the word being borrowed actually means**, but quite simply, **that it is an English word**.

Loans take a number of different forms, and they can all lead to the creation of **False Friends**.

In many cases, the word or expression is taken into the receiving language wholesale **with its spelling and orthography intact** as an Anglicism **but is then applied to something different**. In German a *Cracker* is a *computer hacker* and a *Catcher* is a *wrestler*. In Swedish, a *babysitter* is a particular type of *child's seat*.

MODERN ENGLISH

English loan words as False Friends

In other cases the word is adapted to the orthography and pronunciation of the borrowing language, as it is in Polish *dres*, which means *tracksuit*, or *lunatyk*, which means *sleepwalker*.

A particularly common and curious case is where an English word with an *-ing* ending is used to create a new noun or (rarely) adjective in the borrowing language. These odd Anglicisms are often misleading. This is particularly common in French and Italian:

Il footing, le footing	for JOGGING
Il parking, le parking	for CARPARK
Il camping, le camping	for CAMPSITE
Il dancing, le dancing	for DANCE HALL
Il living, le living	for LIVING ROOM

Cfr: the most confusing English false friends in Italian

<http://www.lifemilan.it/en/false-friends-a-must-learn-list/>

MODERN ENGLISH

Word Formation



English language as both borrower and lender

Cfr. The Boston Globe, June 2014

«English is losing its importance», May 2017

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/may/05/brexit-english-is-losing-its-importance-in-europe-says-juncker>

MODERN ENGLISH

Word Formation



References:

Pinnavaia: pp. 47-54

Nelson: pp. 123-130