



The use of affixation in academic English: A lexical explanation on affixation, root and meaning

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Abstract

This research paper attempts to provide a detailed lexical explanation on 'the use of affixation in academic English in the context of word formation. The use of affixation in words may lead to word formation contributing to sentence construction while sentence construction leading into paragraph creations. The research further illustrates how meaning of the words/ lexis is changed with affixation together with the functional change with affixations when words are combined into sentences. The analysis is mainly focused on affixations linked to word and thereby changing the meaning of lexis used in the context of sentence constructions. Data required for the research is taken mainly from the documents search in relation to language study and such other materials in the study of affixations. The methodology used in this research is document checklists methods for gathering sufficient data. The interpretation of the use of affixation shall facilitate the students, practitioners and future researchers in comprehending the use of affixation in producing creative, innovative and meaningful texts in all types of writings particularly in academic writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Affixation is the process by which words are created either in a different form of the particular word or a new word with a different meaning. Morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language which is used in creating different form of a word or a new word. In this sense, an affix is a morpheme attached to a stem (core/ root or basic) of a word to create new words. In English language, words are created by affixing morphemes to roots of words. According to Bauer and Katamba (2009), affixation is considered as the process of fixing affixes: prefixes, suffixes and infixes to the stem of the given word or words. Katamba (2009) further illustrates the fact that affixation is generally illustrated as the bound morphemes which are used in amalgamation with other morphemes such as root or stem.

According to researchers, for instance Clark (2009) articulates that those affixes are used in identifying and analyzing the complex words with reference to their meaning. The affixation particularly analyzes the internal structure of given words for they are used as building blocks in a complex word. In addition, the derivation of new words is dependent upon the fixing or affixing either prefixes or suffixes to the root or the stem of a word or existing lexis. In English Language, derivational prefixes change the meaning of the words to which they are fixed whilst some change the parts of speech such

as changing a noun to a verb or changing a verb to an adjective etc. it is also noteworthy, suffixes which are derivational change parts of speech which they also change the meaning of the words to which they are affixed. Ingo Plag (2003) states that derivation plays a role as the new-words formation as in the case below.

Derivations

<i>Worker</i>	<i>employee</i>
<i>Useless</i>	<i>inventor</i>
<i>Untruthfulness</i>	<i>inability</i>

Meaningless

<i>Curiosity</i>	<i>unhappy</i>
<i>Passivize</i>	<i>decolonization</i>
<i>Terrorism</i>	<i>suddenness</i>

Although derivation in particular encodes lexical meaning, it is not syntactically relevant yet it can occur inside the derivation. Derivation often changes the parts of speech albeit it is semantically impervious. It also must be born in mind that derivation is not restricted to suffixation although there are restrictions in their productivity.

Most of the words in English Language can consist of their stem/ basic/ root or the core to which one or more affixes are attached at the beginning: the prefixes or at the end of the root: the suffixes (2014, Kennedy). Most of the words are created by the use of affixation in English Language and studying affixation in the context of Academic English will facilitate the language learners to identify and



understand the meaning of the most frequently used affixation. It also must remember that it is not that much convenient in sorting out the root form of all the words for in vocabulary building, borrowing, spelling adjustments in some of the cases and pronunciation has a long history. In other terms, borrowing words from other languages is one of the ways of words formation where it is difficult to find out the basic form of the particular word.

Prior to concentrating on affixation, it is noteworthy to look at basic elements that are most relevant in affixation. Accordingly,

- a. Root: a root is the base part of the word. When changing the meaning of a given word, a prefix can be added to the front of the word root or a suffix can also be added to the back of the given word and usually prefixes and suffixes are added to the root of a given word in changing the meaning.
- b. Prefixes: they are attached before to the root word in changing the meaning. For instance, the word 'de-construct' "de" is the prefix attached to the base form 'construct'.
- c. Suffixes: these are attached to the end of the root word. For example, the word 'reasonable' 'able' is added as the suffix in inflating the meaning.
- d. Infixes: infixes are comparatively very rare in English Language usage and often they are found in

the plural forms. For examples, *passersby*, *spoonful* etc. Infix can be exemplified as the word *bumili* where 'um' is infixed.

Aronoff (2011) definition on affixation slightly differs from the above. According to him, a few affixes are added to the stem of the word. They are;

- i. Re- affixes which go before the stem are called prefixes. E.g., *Revisit*, *recover* etc.
- ii. Ation- affixes which go after the stem of the word called suffixes. E.g., *creation*, *accusation* etc.
- iii. Infixes according to Aronoff are not either added to the before or after the stem word but rather they are fixed in the middle of the word which are called segmental strings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stated in the introduction with little review of a few contributors on word-formation, affixation plays a major role. It is the morphological processes adding phonological materials to a root of a word to change its meaning, syntactic properties or of both elements (Stranzy, 2005). In other terms, grammatical or lexical properties are added to the basic or stem of the given word of which they are called prefixation, suffixation or infixation. According to T. Robert (1993), an affix is a bound morpheme that is often attached to the stem of the word. Although, several definitions are given on affixation, still few



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confusions are available in the connection. Firstly, it is not that easy to determine something whether as a bound morpheme or a free morpheme and secondly it is not possible to regard something as a root, stem or basic or an affix. According to Robins (1971), a bound morpheme ought to appear at least with one another morpheme which can occur if attached to some other. According to Bauer (1993), affixes are obligatorily bound as it is not particularly obvious the difference between bound root and an affix might be. He further clarifies that the root or the stem or the basic is the form that it is not further analyzable either in terms of derivational or inflectional morphology. In other terms, affix is the central morphologically meaningful element of the word to which affixes can be attached.

David Crystal (2008) states that affixes are limited number in a language, and are generally are classified into three categories depending on their position with reference to the root or the stem of the word: those which are attached to the beginning of the root or the stem are called prefixes e.g., *Unhappy*; those which follow are called suffixes as in the case of *happiness* and then those which occur within the root or the stem are called infixes. There are some other less common terms that include circumfix or ambifix for a combination of prefixes and suffixes as in the case of *en-light-en*. The morphological process whether adds

grammatical or lexical information to a stem or root or the base is known as affixation: prefixation, suffixation and infixation.

METHODOLOGY

Hsieh, H.F. & Shannon, S.E. (2005) simply define that the descriptive research attempts to explain certain words, themes or concepts within some qualitative data collected. They further explain using content analysis, researchers analyze the presence, the meaning and relationships of some words and how meaning is generated in the application of the methods. In line with this, the research attempts providing a lexical explanation evaluating the affixation used in words in their derivations and their meaning. As Robin (2010) explains as the descriptive research attempts to describe characteristics of the given data, this research paper too attempts describe characteristics of affixation and the change of meaning when affixes are added to the root or the basic form of the given words. For this research a few selected documents were taken for data collection as primary data based on which the descriptive lexical explanation was carried out.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Affixes are bound morphemes that are often attached to the bases of the word. Though, this definition is succinct, still a clarification ought to be



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made. Firstly, it is not easy to explain that something is a bound morpheme or a free morpheme while on the other hand it is not often obvious whether something should be regarded as a base or an affix.

Putative affixes: error-free tests, education-wise are all derivatives

Neoclassical elements in words formation: *biochemistry, biorhythm, biowarfare, photographs, geology, biology, neurology*

Phonologically neutral suffixes: propag'anda, propag'andaless, adv'enturous, adv'ebturousness, radi'ation, radi'ationless, art'iculate, art'iculateness, m'anagerless etc.

Although a few types of affixations albeit not familiar have been mentioned, the intention of this paper is to provide a lexical explanation on affixation in English Language and to demonstrate ~with few illustrations as to how meaning is changed or altered with the affixation.

Since affixation is discussed at a considerable length, it is noteworthy to discuss how meaning is changed with the affixation: that is adding both prefixes and suffixes. Firstly, there are some frequently used prefixes in English Language.

Prefixes

a~, an~: these two prefixes do mean not, without or lacking in as in the case of *anarchy* which mean without

orders, in the case of *anonymous* meaning with a name but not in fame or exact name is not known.

Example: *The author of this book is anonymous.*

Myanmar is an anarchy now.

ab~: means being away or not being present as in the case of *absent* or of *abduction* of which the later meaning taking somebody away illegally.

Example: *Kalindu was absent yesterday.*

The news reported about an abduction of a businessman in Negombo.

alter~: means another or substitute as in the case of *alternative* meaning another option or in the case of *alter-ego* which means another personality.

Example: *There is an alternative solution if we carefully study this matter.*

It is evident from the discussion that there is an alter-ego in the group which often manager considers to be pain in the neck.

anti~: does mean against something as in the case of *antisocial* or *anti-ragging* meaning against something or someone as in the following examples.

Example: *He was antisocial from the beginning in the varsity.*

Ola Chulani was an anti-ragging student in those olden days.



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auto~: does mean the self as in the case of *autobiography* meaning biography written by oneself.

Example: *He has published his autobiography last year before his death.*

It is an automobile car which runs on its own power.

bi~: does mean two as in the case of bicycle or in the case of biannual as follows;

Example: *Bicycle is a vehicle ridden by pedals.*

This is a biannual journal where people can publish their research.

bio~: means life or related to the life as in the case of *biology* meaning the study of living things or in the case of biography which is the

Example: *Biology is the study of living things.*

Kadirgamar's biography was written by Prof. Rajiva Wijesinha

co~: does mean together or supportive as in the case of *cooperation* meaning working together or in the case of *coordinate* meaning enabling people to work together.

Example: *Your unstinted cooperation is highly appreciated.*

Secretary General's role is to coordinate the peace process.

contr~: does mean against or opposite of something as in the case of *contradict* meaning expressing opposing views or in the case of *controversy* meaning public argument over a something people widely disagree with.

Example: *The Lawyers' views contradict with the government's proposal.*

Now a days, there is a controversy over Port-city project.

culp~: means feeling guilt or at fault as in the case of *culprit* meaning someone who has done something wrong or illegal or in the case of *culpable* meaning blameworthy as follows.

Example: *The High Court enacted a verdict on the culprit.*

Chaminda is culpable for destroying not only his section but the entire institution.

demo~: means of or related to people as in the case of *democracy* meaning government of people or in the case of *demographics* meaning about the data relating to people as in the below examples.

Example: *There is no democracy at present albeit they articulate democracy for people is a must.*

It has been proved by the demographics taken from the Department of Census and Statistics



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dis~: meaning not or the opposite of as in the case of disinformation meaning false information provided deliberately or disprove to say something or someone is wrong or false as in the following examples.

Examples: *It was detected in the inquiry that they have provided disinformation regarding the robbery.*

The evidence provided were disproved at the Court.

dynam~: does mean movement or power as in the case of dynamite or in the case of dynamics meaning science of force involving in the movement as follows;

Examples: *Many people catch fish using dynamites.*

My son is dynamic boy in the college.

eco~: meaning home or related to homely environment as in the case of economy or in the case of ecology meaning creatures living in a particular environment as in the examples below.

Examples: *During Covid 19, our economy is not in a healthy state.*

The government should take initiatives to protect our ecosystem.

eu~: does mean good as in the case of eulogy meaning praising about someone or in the case of euphemism meaning indirectly referring to

something unpleasant at times to make it acceptable.

Example: *He understood underline motive of his eulogy.*

Euphemism is a literary technique used in literary creation.

ex~: means former or previous as in the case of ex-wife or ex-headmaster meaning or referring to the previous one as in the case of the following examples.

Examples: *His ex-wife was a teacher in a private school.*

The ex-Headmaster of the college was a strict disciplinarian.

hypo~: does mean below or under as in the case of hypodermic syringe or in the case of hypocrite meaning pretending to have moral standard but truly not as below;

Examples: *It is a hypodermic syringe for Covid 19 patients.*

His behavior demonstrates to be a hypocrite.

in~: means to not or in the negative sense as in the case of inability that is not being able to or in the case inaudible meaning to being able to hear.

Examples: *His teaching demonstrates his inability to teach in an advanced class.*

Her speech was inaudible for majority of the meeting.



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mal~: does mean negative meaning bad as in the case of *malnutrition* meaning poor state of healthy due to vitamins or in the case of *malice* meaning feeling of hatred for someone as follows.

Examples: *Malnutrition is a major problem in developing countries.*

My mother could not tolerate the malice of her daughters-in-law

maxi~: means most or majority as in *maximum* meaning the greatest number or in the case of *maximal* meaning as large as possible as in the following examples.

Example: *The principal put the maximum effort to keep the classes moving amidst Covid pandemic.*

His effort to combat Covid 19 pandemic was maximal.

mini~: does mean small or tiny as in the case of *miniskirt* meaning short-skirt or in the case of *minimum* meaning smallest possible as in the case of *minimum* number.

Examples: *Tina often used to wear miniskirts to the office.*

The minimum number of patients that can be accommodated is fifteen.

multi~: meaning many choices as in the case of *multiple* options or in the case of *multilingual* as in the case of

multilingual community as following examples.

Examples: *It basically provides multiple options to operate the machine.*

Many villages in India speak several languages and thus become multilingual.

non~: does mean not or no as in the case of *nonacademic* or in the case of *nonsense* meaning no sense at all.

Examples: *Nonacademic union is on strike for demanding a salary hike.*

He often speaks nonsense not knowing the vision and mission of the organization.

out~: does mean greater, better or further as in the case of *outsmart* or in the case of *outperform* meaning doing better than someone else as in the following examples.

Examples: *His works proved him to be an outsmart boy in the programme.*

Enuka outperformed in the classroom.

It is observed from the above prefixes used in the selective examples in the sentences created that prefixes derive different form of the words to which they are attached. In most of the cases, prefixes change the meaning of the words when they are attached to the root or the stem of the given words. In other words, prefixes modify the meaning of a word as in the case of



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'post' meaning after or following as in the example of 'postnatal' meaning after birth. The meaning of the word 'natal' is about birth but when the prefix 'post' is added it becomes 'postnatal' meaning after birth and thus it changes the meaning when prefixes are added to the stem of the words. The prefixes can make the words negative, show repetition or can indicate opinions.

This can be further illustrated using a few more most frequently used prefixes by means of using the such prefixes attaching them to the roots of the words to understand the change of the meaning when prefixes are added.

pre~: does mean before as in the case of *prediction* meaning a statement of what would happen as in the following example.

Examples: *My prediction about him is that he will never march forward if he behaves in this manner.*

It was the prediction of the principal about his present position as he performed well.

pro~: means in favor of or supporting as in the case of *promotion* meaning the next step in a position or in the case of *propose* meaning putting forward a plan for something as below,

Examples: *His promotion was due in October 2021*

They proposed to introduce a new study programme to the university.

retro~: meaning backwards as in the case of *in retrospect* meaning thinking about something how had happened in the past or in *retrograde* meaning returning to how something was in the past as in the following examples.

Examples: *Speaking in retrospect, it was an exciting experience contributing to establish a university.*

Retrograding was always important to look at how something had happened in its establishment.

sub~: meaning below, under or lesser as in the case of *substandard* meaning not as good as normal or in the case of *subway train* meaning underground as in the following examples.

Examples: *He has published his paper in a substandard journal.*

We wonder when we will be able to hear about subway trains in Sri Lanka.

un~: means the opposite of or not as in the case of *unattractive* meaning not attractive or in the case of *undeniable* as in the case of *undeniable evidence* as below,

Example: *It was an unattractive decoration.*

They produced undeniable evidence for his forge signatures.



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uni~: does mean single or one as *uniform* meaning special dress code for a organization or in the case of *unity* meaning together being one as in the following examples.

Examples: *All the member of Brandix must wear their uniform.*

Unity among diversity should be the motto of a multi-community.

Suffixes

As opposed to prefixes, suffixes are placed at the end of the root or base form of the word. The role of a suffix is to transform a word into a new part of speech in English Language as a noun can be transformed into an adjective whilst a verb transforming into a noun etc. For example, if we add suffix 'ish' to the noun; 'baby' it becomes 'babyish' an adjective. A few most frequently used suffixes which are used in English Language is utilized as follow in exemplifying how suffixes transform the parts of speech from one category to another.

~able: does mean can be or has the quality as in the case of *usable* or *reasonable* as below example.

Examples: *This vehicle is still in the usable condition*

I am still being very reasonable about the impeachment.

~cracy: means government or rule as in the case of *democracy* or *aristocracy* as in the following examples.

Examples: *In a democracy people can vote as they wish.*

An aristocracy is the rule of many by a few.

~dom: does mean condition or state of as in the case of *freedom* or *boredom* as in the below examples.

Examples: *I value my freedom above anything else.*

My pressure is due to the boredom of my junior indiscipline people.

~fusion: meaning mixing together as in the case of *confusion* or in the case of *transfusion* as follows.

Examples: *All his ideas have created a confusion in the examination.*

Doctors warned the transfusion of blood at this hour of need.

~hood: meaning state or quality of as in the case of *brotherhood* or in the case of *priesthood* as follows.

Examples: *My brotherhood is on top of everything in my family life.*

His priesthood started from his early childhood.

~ism: meaning state or quality of or teaching of as in the case of *alcoholism* or *Buddhism* as in the following examples.

Examples: *Alcoholism is increasingly a serious problem in our country today.*



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Buddhism is the predominant religion in Sri Lanka.

~ize/ise: meaning become or make as in the case of *materialize* or in the case of *jeopardize* or *organize* as in the below examples.

Examples: *It was materialized after a successful review.*

The programme was organized in such a way to attract a huge gathering.

~mania: does mean uncontrollable belief or desire as in the case of *kleptomania* or in the case *megalomaniac* meaning unnatural strong wish for power thinking that they are much more important and powerful than they really are.

Examples: *A Kleptomaniac can not stop stealing things.*

He was a megalomaniac as he loved power.

CONCLUSION

In English Language affixation plays a pivotal role in the word formation process. Affixation is the process or adding a morpheme or an affix to a word to create either a different form of the particular word or a new word with a different meaning and it is the common way of making new words in English Language. Although, affixation involves prefixes, suffixes and infixes, frequently prefixes and suffixes are in usage than that of

infixation. Prefixes often are added to the root, stem or the base of the word and they change the meaning of the words. As opposed to prefixes, suffixes when added to the end of the word transform the word category from one category to another. Studying about affixation in English Language will facilitate any learner to become familiar with word formation and thereby improves the understanding of the vocabulary required for a rich communication in English Language.

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