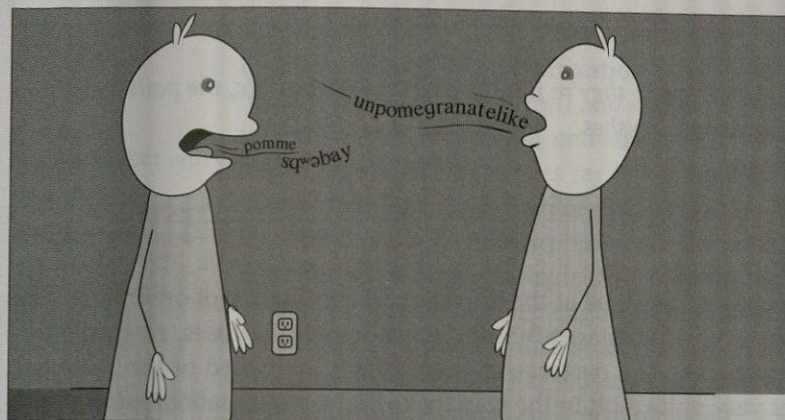




Chapter at a Glance

Morphological Typology and Word Formation

Key Concepts

- Languages can be classified by morphological type as analytic or synthetic or on a continuum somewhere between these two types.
- English is mostly analytic but has some synthetic properties.
- We create new English words in a wide variety of ways.
- Through word formation processes, we are able to continually and creatively add words and alter the meanings and structures of existing ones.
- Word formation processes clearly illustrate our enormous capacity for creativity in language and that language is a dynamic, ever-changing system.

Did You Know . . . ?

Solid Roundish Objects and Mushy Matter
The Truth about *Truthiness*

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Linguistics in the News F***ing Brilliant! FCC Rulings on Profanity

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Morphological Typology

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Damn words; they're just the pots and pans of life, the pails and scrub brushes.

—EDITH WHARTON, 1932

In this chapter, we look at the inflectional morphology of other languages and show how languages fall into morphological classes, or typologies, with respect to the patterns of their affixes and word order. Although languages vary quite a bit in the way they express grammatical information, we find that some general properties of grammatical structure are at work in all languages, which provides further evidence for Universal Grammar.

We then turn to how we form words in ways other than affixation, through a variety of processes that give us such words as *blog*, *NASA*, *flip-flopper*, *sch noodle*, and *popemobile*. Languages have wonderful, built-in ways of creating new words. We make new words when we have a new concept, thing, or action that needs a label, when we give a new name to an existing thing (for political, social, ironic, or comic reasons), or when we just play with the language. To create words, regardless of why we do so, we exhibit our unconscious knowledge of the inner workings of our language. We know how to manipulate morphemes because we all have a great deal of knowledge of the meaningful units of our various languages.

Morphological Typology

We have already seen some of the ways morphological systems differ across languages. For example, in English we indicate that something will happen in the future by a modal verb and the infinitival form of the verb:

I speak. I will speak.
(modal) (infinitive)

Spanish indicates the future by modifying the inflectional affixes within the verb.

Hablo I speak.
Hablaré I will speak.

In this section, we examine some of the various ways languages combine morphemes and how languages fall into **morphological typologies** based on their common morphological structures. We detail these language types and consider some examples of each.

We have seen that English uses a variety of morphological strategies to express grammatical tense, aspect, plurality, possession, comparative and

morphological typology classification of languages according to common morphological structures

synthetic language
language in which
syntactic relations
are expressed
by inflectional
morphemes rather
than by word order

analytic language
language in which
syntactic relations
are expressed
primarily by word
order rather than
by inflectional
morphemes
attached to words

superlative degrees, and other relationships. To express these relationships, English uses inflectional affixation (*cats*, *freezing*, *biggest*), as well as vowel mutation (*foot/feet*, *run/ran*) and suppletion (*go/went*, *good/better*), to show inflection on verbs, nouns, and adjectives. We have also seen that, relatively speaking, English expresses far fewer such grammatical relationships than many other languages do. For instance, as we learned in the previous chapter, pronouns in English express some case relationships, but other nouns do not express case morphologically except in the genitive, or possessive, case (*manatee's flipper*). Rather, English relies on word order to express case relationships (e.g., subject, direct object, and indirect object) and grammatical functions. English thus has what we call a mixed system: some grammatical relationships are expressed morphologically and some by word order.

Languages that express grammatical relationships morphologically are called **synthetic languages**. These languages' words are more complex, made up of content root morphemes with one or more affixes. Most European languages are synthetic and have both prefixes and suffixes. English, though it has some synthetic features, is more of an **analytic language**. In analytic languages, words tend to consist of free morphemes with very few affixes. We learn more about these two language types in the following sections.

Synthetic Languages

Synthetic languages form words by affixing morphemes to a root morpheme. Word order is less important in these languages because the affixes, rather than the position of the words in the sentence, indicate grammatical relationships.

Synthetic languages are typically further broken down into two subtypes: *agglutinative* and *fusional*. **Agglutinative languages** can have several morphemes that attach to a root morpheme, and each morpheme has only one meaning that is clearly distinct. Some agglutinative languages are Turkish, Swahili, Salish languages, Nahuatl, and Japanese, among many others. Here are examples of a Lushootseed (Salish) sentence and one from Swahili. Notice the many morphemes within the verb and that each has a unique meaning (illustrated by the hyphens separating the distinct morphemes):

sq ^w əbay?	tiʔə?	sug ^w əčəb
sq ^w əbay?	tiʔə?	s-u-g ^w əč- əb
dog	determiner	NOUN PREFIX-PUNCTUAL-look for- MIDDLE-3rd person object

'The one he is looking for is the dog.' (Hess, personal communication)

Hawàtasóma kitabu

Ha-wà-ta-sóma

negative-3rd person plural-FUTURE-read

kitabu

book

'They will not read the book.'

agglutinative language language whose words have several morphemes that attach to a root morpheme, and each morpheme has only one distinct meaning

hwaet!

With more than 100,000 native speakers, Navajo has more speakers than any other Native North American language. This number has actually increased with time as language revitalization programs have gone into effect.

Another interesting fact about Swahili is that all noun **roots** are bound morphemes, so in the preceding example the root *-tabu* 'book' cannot stand alone and must have a prefix that marks the word class it belongs to. There is one prefix for trees, plants, and nature; another for names of humans; another for names of animals, and so on. (There are about thirteen classes.)

Another example of agglutinative languages are the Athabaskan languages spoken from Alaska through western Canada and all the way down to the American Southwest (thus including Navajo); they have about twenty different affixes that can attach to the verb root and that indicate grammatical functions and relationships (e.g., subject, object, and indirect object) or other grammatical information (e.g., tense, aspectual categories, and negation). (We discuss noun classes again in Chapter 10, on semantics.) Here is a sentence from the southern Alaskan language Ahtna, also called Tanaina:

Ts'anhdghulayał hyegh nuqulnix htsast'a.

Ts'anhdghulayał	qey-egh	nu-qe-ghe-l-nix	qe-tsas-t'a
name	him-about	ITERATIVE-it-PREFIX-	it-about-be
		CLASSIFIER-tell.stories	

'A long time ago they used to tell stories about Ts'anhdghulayał.'

(Mithun 1999: 366)

It is not important for our purposes here that you know all of the terms used to describe the prefixes but rather that you see that the morphological system is quite complex, with most words containing many meaningful parts.

Such highly agglutinative languages, languages with a high number of morphemes per word, are also called **polysynthetic languages**. In addition to the Athabaskan languages, many other native North American languages are polysynthetic languages, as are many Australian languages. Here is another example, this one a single word from Yup'ik, a member of the Eskimo-Aleut language family, whose many languages are spoken in Siberia, Greenland, Alaska, and northeastern Canada.

kaipiallulliniuk

kaig-piar-llru-llini-u-k

be.hungry-really-PAST-apparently-INDICATIVE-they.two

'The two of them were apparently really hungry.'

(Mithun 1999: 38)

When we see a language that forms its words this way, the question once again arises, What is a word, and how can we distinguish a word from a sentence in such languages? Since this single word in Yup'ik conveys the same information that would be expressed in a whole sentence in English, how do we know that this is, in fact, a word in Yup'ik? Our intuitions tell

polysynthetic language language with a high number of morphemes per word

us a lot about whether something is a word in our own language, so native speaker judgments are the best way to determine whether clusters of morphemes are recognized as single words. This is true also in languages that are not written; speakers or signers of the language have intuitions about what constitutes a word, and the concept of *word* does seem to be psychologically real. Although speakers and signers do not pause between words, they can do so, indicating their awareness of word boundaries. This same awareness holds in polysynthetic languages in which the words are quite morphologically complex. Mithun (1999) points out, too, that speakers are not typically consciously aware of the meanings of individual morphemes within words but do know the meanings of the whole words, again giving evidence for the concept *word* (p. 38). And in many languages, stress patterns correlate with the concept of *word*; there is only one primary stress per word.

Consider that we recognize a word like *unconstitutionality* in English as a single word, even though we can divide it into its meaningful parts. None of those other bound morphemes can stand alone; thus, the word is a single word made up of several meaningful morphemes:

un-constitu-tion-al-ity

(And maybe *con-* is an affix, too? It appears in words such as *constrain* and *conserve*, where it comes from the Latin prefix *com-* ‘together’. And it occurs in words such as *consternation*, where *con-* is a Latinate “intensive prefix.”)

Agglutinative languages contrast with **fusional languages**, in which the morphemes attached to the root may fuse more than one meaning into a single affix. Some fusional languages are Spanish, German, Russian, and Semitic languages such as Hebrew, among others. Consider from this German example how a determiner alone can carry much distinct meaning:

der Hund ‘the dog’

der = definite masculine nominative singular

Hund = dog singular

And here’s another example from Russian, showing the various forms of the root *stol-*, meaning ‘table’. In English, of course, the forms are the same, except for the genitive, to which *-s* is added.

	Singular	Plural	English examples of cases
Nominative	stol	stol-y	The <u>table</u> is wooden (‘table’ is the subject)
Accusative	stol	stol-y	She saw <u>the table</u> (‘table’ is the direct object)
Genitive	stol-a	stol-ov	The <u>table’s</u> legs (‘table’ is a possessive)
Dative	stol-u	stol-am	She gave <u>the table</u> new paint. (‘table’ is the indirect object)

The *-a* on *stola* indicates both singular and genitive. Similarly, the *-am* on *stolam* means dative and plural.

fusional language
language in which
morphemes have
more than one
meaning fused into
a single affix

Did You Know...?



Solid Roundish Objects and Mushy Matter

In Navajo, distinct verb stems classify an object by its shape or other physical characteristics and also describe the movement or state of the object. The eleven "handling" verb stems are the following:

Classifier + Stem	Explanation	Examples
-'á	solid roundish object	bottle, ball, boot, box
-yí	load, pack, burden	backpack, bundle, sack, saddle
-jool	noncompact matter	bunch of hair or grass, cloud, fog
-lá	slender flexible object	rope, mittens, socks, pile of fried onions
-tí'	slender stiff object	arrow, bracelet, skillet, saw
-tsooz	flat flexible object	blanket, coat, sack of groceries
-t'éé'	mushy matter	ice cream, mud, slumped-over drunk person
-nil	plural objects 1	eggs, balls, animals, coins
-jaa'	plural objects 2	marbles, seeds, sugar, bugs
-ká	open container	glass of milk, spoonful of food, handful of flour
-t'í	animate object	microbe, person, corpse, doll

(Young 2000: 3–7)

So, for example, Navajo does not have a single verb that corresponds to an English word like *give*. To say the equivalent of "Give me some hay," the Navajo verb *níjool* (noncompact matter) must be used; for "Give me a cigarette," the verb *nítí'ih* (slender stiff object) must be used. The English verb *give* is expressed by eleven verbs in Navajo, depending on the characteristics of the object. In addition to defining the physical properties of the object, Navajo verb stems can distinguish the manner of the object's movement. There are three manners of movement, described as *handling*, which include actions like carrying, lowering, and taking; *propelling*, which includes tossing, throwing, and dropping; and *free flight*, which includes falling and flying through space. For example, using a solid-roundish-object stem, the -'á affix means 'to handle (a round object)', -ne' means 'to throw (a round object)', and -ts'id means '(a round object) moves independently', as these words and their translations illustrate:

tsits'aa'náá'á	'I lowered the box down'
tsits'aa'náá'tne'	'I tossed the box down'
tsits'aa'náá'ts'id	'the box fell'

(Young 2000: 2)

For more information

Young, R. 2000. *The Navajo verb system: An overview*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

Analytic Languages

In an analytic language, grammatical information is conveyed by word order and particles rather than by inflectional morphemes. In the analytic language—Vietnamese, for example—the form of the verb is the same regardless of the subject of the verb, and no tense or other agreement marking is expressed on the verb. Consider the verb *ăn*, meaning ‘eat’ in the following paradigm:

tôi <u>ăn</u>	I eat	chúng tôi <u>ăn</u>	we eat
anh <u>ăn</u>	you eat	các anh <u>ăn</u>	you (pl.) eat
anh â’y <u>ăn</u>	he eats	họ <u>ăn</u>	they eat
chị â’y <u>ăn</u>	she eats		
nó <u>ăn</u>	it eats		

As you can see, the verb *ăn* always has the same form.

As analytic languages have very few derivational or inflectional affixes, they often form words by combining free morphemes into compound words:

life
guard
lifeguard
lifeguard chair
lifeguard chair tan (you know, a tan someone might get sitting on a lifeguard chair)

Chinese, a largely analytic language, also has a great many compounds. (Although Chinese is a tone language, as discussed in Chapter 3, the tones are not indicated on the words shown here.)

dit ban
grand board
‘floor’

lu kou
road mouth
‘intersection’

And this one is a bit more metaphorical:

ming bai
bright white
‘to understand’

RPE 6.1

Mixed Typological Systems

Although some languages fall into a clearly analytic or clearly synthetic system, many, like English, are mixed systems. Let’s look first at the ways in which English is synthetic. English expresses plurality by the morpheme *-s* and past tense by the morpheme *-ed* and is thus synthetic in this regard. Vowel mutation used to express tense or aspect, as in English strong verbs, is also a property of synthetic languages. English relies on word order rather than

morphology, however, to express future tense. In English, this tense is formed by the addition of *will*, *going to*, or sometimes *shall* to the verb phrase (*will visit*, *going to visit*, *shall visit*). To express negation, the morpheme *not* is added to the sentence, changing the positive sentence *The student is learning Old English* into the negated version, *The student is **not** learning Old English*. Future tense and negation are both examples of how grammatical relationships can be expressed by separate words and word order rather than morphologically on the verb, as it is in many synthetic languages. In this way, English is an analytic language.

Prepositions are words that express a grammatical relationship (of location, direction, etc.) that applies to a noun. A language with prepositions as separate words, such as English, is analytic in this regard. In many languages, however, prepositions show up as inflections on nouns, so they are not separate words but affixes. Old English had both types: prepositions as separate words and prepositions that were attached to other words; therefore, Old English had both analytic and synthetic properties.

Synthetic preposition

þæt entas woldon aræran ane burh
that giants would up-raise a city
'that giants would raise up a city'

(Anglo-Saxon Chronicle 22.318.14)

Analytic preposition

þæs cyninges þegnas þe him beæftan wærun
the kings thegns who him behind were
'the king's thegns (servants) who were behind him'

(Cynewulf and Cyneheard)

Incidentally, in Old English, prepositions usually preceded their objects when the object was a noun, but they usually followed the object when the object was a pronoun, as shown in the preceding example.

The history of the English language offers an excellent illustration of a shift from a highly synthetic language, Old English, to a largely analytic one, Present-Day English. As you can see by the examples in the previous chapter that illustrate the inflectional morphology of nouns, verbs, and adjectives in Old English, the language was primarily synthetic, even though it had certain analytic relationships as well (as illustrated by the mixed use of prepositions as separate words and as inflections). These inflectional affixes largely disappeared in the Middle English period (1100–1400 CE), and nouns, verbs, and adjectives became, in general, largely uninflected. The shift from a synthetic to an analytic language had the consequence of triggering a shift in word order; in Old English, word order was much freer (though not entirely without constraints), but in Middle English, word order became fairly rigid, as Subject–Verb–Object. Word order became crucial in order to interpret grammatical relationships that had been indicated by inflectional morphology.

Many other languages also exhibit mixed morphological systems. Though Chinese is usually given as an example of an analytic language, it does have some bound morphemes. And Japanese has a high degree of inflectional marking on verbs, so it is synthetic in that respect, but it has almost no affixes on nouns, so it is analytic in that respect.

RPE 6.2

The Morphology of Other Languages

Through a method of comparing and contrasting, you can discover a great deal about the morphology of languages you are not familiar with. Data organized in this way is called a *paradigm*. Paradigms are useful in working out the morphology of a language; they let you compare words that have different inflections so you can tell what the root is and what the affixes are. Consider the following data from Spanish:

amigo	'male friend'	perro	'male dog'
amiga	'female friend'	perra	'female dog'
amigos	'male friends'	perros	'male dogs'
amigas	'female friends'	perras	'female dogs'

From this data, you can see that the root *amig-* appears every time we have 'friend' in the translation, and the root *perr-* appears every time we have 'dog' in the translation. Thus, *amig-* and *perr-* must mean 'friend' and 'dog', respectively. Also, the suffix *-o* appears every time we have 'male' in the English translation, and *-a* appears when we have 'female'. Thus, *-o* and *-a* must mean masculine and feminine gender, respectively.

And consider the following words from Classical Greek and their English translations. (Recall that : after a vowel indicates a long vowel.)

grapho:	'I write'	uo:	'I lose'
grapheis	'you (sg.) write'	ueis	'you (sg.) lose'
graphei	'he/she/it writes'	uei	'he/she/it loses'
grapho:men	'we write'	uo:men	'we lose'
graphe:te	'you (pl.) write'	ue:te	'you (pl.) lose'
graphousi	'they write'	uousi	'they lose'

RPE 6.3

By simply comparing and contrasting, you can determine the roots of the Classical Greek verbs 'write' and 'lose' and the morphemes that correspond to the various pronominal agreement forms.

RPE 6.4

Word Formation Processes

The previous sections show some of the ways in which other languages build words. And in the previous chapter, we saw some of the many ways in which we create new words in English through derivational affixation. Derivational

affixation is not our only option for creating new words, however. In these next sections, we will discuss a number of additional ways in which new words are formed and in which existing words take on new meanings.

We don't have to look very far to find examples of new words coming into the language—as completely new words, as old words that had fallen out of use and come back into the language, or as new words created from parts of existing words. New words come into languages all the time. Most will stick around, and others will cease to be used because they are no longer necessary (due to an obsolete item or a passing fad). Some remain slang, their use restricted to a particular group.

Slang versus New Words

slang an informal word or expression that has not gained complete acceptability and is used by a particular group

Let's explore the concept of slang in a bit more depth. **Slang** words or phrases are typically very informal, and they are usually restricted to a particular group—typically teens and young adults—as a marker of in-group status. Most are not new words but existing words that have acquired new meanings for some group. Slang is also characterized by having a fairly short life; most slang words do not last more than a generation. And those that do stick around soon cease to be slang; some former slang words include *dwindle*, *mob*, *hubbub*, and *rowdy*. There are a few exceptions: words that still are informal and colorful but are used by multiple groups and generations. *Cool* is one. Can you think of other words that still seem to be slang but are used by, say, you and your parents and maybe even your grandparents? While particular slang terms are sometimes viewed unfavorably by those who do not use them, slang is a feature of most languages and is an indicator of the ways in which language adapts for the purposes of those who use it. As Gilbert Keith Chesterton wrote way back in 1902, “The one stream of poetry which is continually flowing is slang.”

jargon specialized vocabulary associated with a trade or profession, sport, game, etc.

Slang can be distinguished from **jargon**. Jargon is also words or phrases used by a particular group, but jargon is not as informal; rather, it is associated with particular professions, trades, sports, occupations, games, and so on. We have used lots of linguistics jargon in this book so far: *phoneme*, *diphthong*, *allophone*, *morpheme*, *bilabial*. Snowboarders have their own jargon: *air*, *carving*, *fakie*, *grind*, *jibbing*, *half-pipe*. (Look 'em up or ask a boarder!)

dialect variety of a language that has unique phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary

Slang is not the same as a **dialect**. Dialects have their own unique phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary. The same slang terms may be shared across dialects, and dialects are not short-lived like slang terms.

register manner of speaking that depends on audience (e.g., formal versus informal)

Slang should also not be confused with style or **register**. We all have different ways of speaking formally and informally, though these styles can vary a great deal across speech groups. We shift registers easily and unconsciously from a job interview to a conversation with close friends, using different vocabulary, more or less prescriptively correct forms, and even different intonation.

LINGUISTICS
IN THE NEWS

F***ing Brilliant! FCC Rulings on Profanity

What exactly is profanity? What do we mean when we call something profane, indecent, or obscene? The Federal Communications Commission (FCC), a U.S. government agency established by the Communications Act of 1934, is charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable, including material that is "obscene," "indecent," or "profane." Recent court cases demonstrate that determining what constitutes obscenity and profanity is not an easy matter.

The FCC website provides the following information: "Obscene speech is not protected by the First Amendment and broadcasters are prohibited, by statute and regulation, from airing obscene programming at any time. According to the U.S. Supreme Court, to be obscene, material must meet a three-prong test: (1) an average person, applying contemporary community standards, must find that the material, as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest (i.e., material having a tendency to excite lustful thoughts); (2) the material must depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by applicable law; and (3) the material, taken as a whole, must lack serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value. The Supreme Court has indicated that this test is designed to cover hard-core pornography." And the FCC's

definition of profanity: "Profane language" includes those words that are so highly offensive that their mere utterance in the context presented may, in legal terms, amount to a "nuisance."

Not only is it difficult to define obscene and profane language, but the definitions themselves depend on possibly subjective notions of "prurient interest" and material that "lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value," and so on.

In NBC's 2003 broadcast of the Golden Globe Awards show, the lead singer of U2, Bono, uttered the phrase *fucking brilliant*. In October 2004, the FCC ruled that the use of the word *fucking* as an adjective in this context was not indecent. The decision ruled that the broadcast had not violated the indecency prohibition, because Bono's use of the "f-word" had been "fleeting" and "in a nonsexual context." However, the FCC later overruled its own Enforcement Bureau's decision and put a new policy into place, the Golden Globe Awards Order, which warns broadcasters that "depending on context, it would consider the 'f-word' and those words (or variants thereof) that are as highly offensive as the f-word to be 'profane language' that cannot be broadcast between 6 A.M. and 10 P.M." It also concluded that other cases holding that isolated or fleeting use of the f-word are not indecent are no longer good law. The commission further concluded that use of the f-word in the

context of the Golden Globe Awards was profane under 18 U.S.C. Section 1464.

Though no fines were issued for this incident—or for another involving Nicole Richie (who uttered the f-word during the Billboard Music Awards)—the FCC says that it will issue fines for future violations. Broadcasting companies FOX, ABC, NBC, and CBS challenged the new policy in an attempt to clarify the order to make sure they do not violate the rules.

In July 2010, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the FCC's policy banning even a single "patently offensive" expletive and other profanity on television and radio violates the First Amendment. The three-judge panel said the FCC "will have to go back to the drawing board" if it wants a profanity policy that will survive scrutiny since the current policy is "unconstitutionally vague" and creates a "chilling effect that goes far beyond the fleeting expletives at issue here." (Hamblett 2010)

For more information

<http://www.fcc.gov/eb/oip/welcome/>

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/02/25/tech/main602251.shtml>

<http://www.cnn.com/2003/LAW/12/23/findlaw.analysis.hilden.indecency/>

Hamblett, Mark, "2nd Circuit Strikes FCC Profanity Ban as Vague, Overly Broad," *New York Law Journal*, July 14, 2010, <http://www.law.com/jsp/article.jsp?id=1202463506252>

taboo word forbidden word or expression interpreted as insulting, vulgar, or rude in a particular language

RPE 6.5

And finally, slang should be distinguished from **taboo** words. Most (if not all) languages have taboo words, and they typically refer to things that are forbidden or unmentionable in the culture. Many languages have taboo words that refer to sex and excrement, for example. It also considered taboo or blasphemous (from the Greek word *blasphemia*, meaning ‘profane speech, slander’) to use words affiliated with religion or religious figures in a way that is offensive or shows lack of respect. It’s interesting that the substitutes for the taboo words, which may have exactly the same meaning and are clearly a substitute, do not carry the same power as the taboo words themselves. Consider *shoot* for *shit*, *darn* for *damn*, *heck* for *hell*. Taboo words are also distinct from slang words because they have staying power; many of our taboo words have been around, with approximately the same meanings, for hundreds and hundreds of years.

Recent New Words

Now let’s consider new words that have recently come into the language. Some may be slang, but others may become more permanent additions to the language.

Every year, the American Dialect Society (ADS), a professional group of linguists, holds an annual Word of the Year competition, which showcases new words. The ADS notes that the words do not have to be “brand new” but must be newly prominent or notable, much like *Time* magazine’s Person of the Year. The Word of the Year is announced in January at the annual ADS meeting and posted on the ADS website, and even hits the front page of most newspapers (<http://www.american-dialect.org/>).

ADS Word of the Year for 2010 *app*: (noun) an abbreviated form of *application*, a software program for a computer or phone operating system

ADS Word of the Year for 2009 *tweet*: (noun) a short message sent via the Twitter.com service, and (verb), the act of sending such a message

ADS Word of the Year for 2008 *bailout*: the rescue by the government of companies on the brink of failure, including large players in the banking industry.

Another “word watcher” website is Word Spy, “dedicated to recently coined words and existing words revived into modern usage” (<http://www.wordspy.com/>). Here are a few of Word Spy’s recent additions.

- **trypophobia** *n.* (2010) – An unusually strong fear of, or aversion to, holes, particularly tiny holes that appear clustered together
- **defriend** *v.* (2010) – To remove a person from one’s list of friends on a social networking site
- **lifestreaming** *n.* (2007)—an online record of a person’s daily activities, either via direct video feed or via aggregating the person’s online content such as blog posts, social network updates, and online photos. *lifestreamer n.*, *lifestream v.*, *n.*

- **gamification** *n.* (2011)—The use of game-related concepts in non-game websites and applications to encourage users to perform actions desired by the business. *gamify* *v.*

hwæt!

Visit the ADS website (<http://www.americandialect.org/>) to see which words were nominated for Word of the Year but didn't make it.

Other recent top words of the week, according to Word Spy: *rusticle*, *polyfidelity*, *municide*, *phishing*, *metrosexual*, *earworm*, and *spim*.

As you can see by examining the examples of new words from the American Dialect Society and Word Spy lists, we make great use of existing roots, stems, and affixes to create new words. For example, *metrosexual* is a combination of the Greek morpheme *metro* and the adjective *sexual*, following the same pattern as *homosexual* and *heterosexual*, which is also evident in the more recent *retrosexual* and *pomosexual*. The word *mash-up* follows a common pattern of making nouns of verb + particle (phrasal verb) constructions. Verb + particle constructions follow a particular syntactic pattern, as the following examples illustrate.

- The teacher handed out the papers.
- The teacher handed the papers out. Noun: *handout*

Did You Know...?



The Truth about Truthiness

The press likes to get in on the American Dialect Society's pick for Word of the Year. In a story about the 2005 winner, *truthiness*, a reporter neglected to mention that the term was made popular by Stephen Colbert of *The Colbert Report*, a TV show on Comedy Central. It was Colbert's sense of the word that caused it to be Word of the Year. Colbert explained, "We're not talking about truth, we're talking about something that seems like truth—the truth we want to exist" (Sternbergh 2006). Right after the American Dialect Society's selection of the word, the reporter interviewed a linguist who must not have known about the Colbert source, so he cited an older definition of *truthiness* from the Oxford English Dictionary; its use was rare even in the 1800s, when it was cited as a derivation of *truth*. The word's oddity as a noun is due to the fact that because there is already a noun, *truth*, we do not expect another noun form, *truthiness*, to have the same meaning. But in fact, it doesn't have the same meaning as *truth*, and isn't Colbert's intended meaning—something like truth but not truth—appropriate in today's political context?

The term made a comeback in 2010 when it was used frequently during the campaign leading up to Jon Stewart and Stephen Colbert's "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," also dubbed the "Restore Truthiness" rally, held in Washington, DC.

For more information

Sternbergh, A. 2006. Stephen Colbert has America by the ballots. *New York Magazine*, October 16.

- a. The farmer shooed in the cows.
- b. The farmer shooed the cows in. Noun: *shoo-in*

In the (a) sentences, nothing comes between the verb (*hand*, *shoo*) and following the particle (*out*, *in*). In the (b) sentences, on the other hand, the particle appears to the right of the direct object (*the papers*, *the cows*). Syntactic details aside, verb + particle constructions are the source of nouns such as *handout*, *shoo-in*, *takeout*, *takeover*, *pickup*, and the recent additions *mash-up*, *meet-up*, and *drawdown*.

We will look in some detail at a few word formation processes, many of which illustrate our creativity with language, and also at the systematic nature of morphological rules.

Coining

coining

(neologism)

recently created word; typically refers to a word not derived from existing words

Coinings, or **neologisms**, are words that have been recently created. They often apply to new inventions or concepts. The word *neologism* means ‘new word’ and was, in fact, itself a neologism around 1800. True coinings, which are completely new words, are rather rare relative to the vast number of words we create by means of the other word formation processes.

Shakespeare is often credited with coining many words, such as *sanctimonious*, *fashionable*, *bedazzle*, *pander*, and *unearthly*; however, notice that these coinings have recognizably English morphology, including the affixes *-ous*, *-ly*, *-able*, and *un-*. Often, words that are called coinings are really not; they are formed from existing morphemes by existing word formation processes. For example, *blog* is listed as a coining on the Word Spy website, and though it is certainly a new word, it is a blend of existing words: *web* and *log*. *Sniglets* are new words so dubbed by comedian Rich Hall; they are words that he would like to see in the dictionary that fill a gap—words for things we don’t have a word for. But even sniglets are usually formed by English word formation processes. His noun *backspackle*, for example, is a compound of *back* and *spackle*, meaning ‘the markings on the back of one’s shirt from riding a fenderless bicycle.’

True coinings include *googol* (invented by the then 9-year-old nephew of American mathematician Edward Kasner as the name for a very large number, ten to the power of one hundred) and *bling* (hip-hop slang for expensive or flashy jewelry). The British duo Douglas Adams and John Lloyd wrote *The Meaning of Liff*, a humorous dictionary of things there aren’t words for but should be. These are distinguished from sniglets because all the words listed come from place names (mostly from the United Kingdom); place names, they say, because they are seldom used and could be fine words for all those things we don’t have words for. Two examples are *oughterby*, which is defined as someone you don’t want to invite to a party but feel you should, and *nottage*, a word for the things you find a use for right after you have thrown them away.

Compounding

compounding

combining one or more words into a single word

One very common way to form new English words is by **compounding**. A compound is formed when two or more words behave as a single word. English speakers know, for example, that *black bird* in the sentence *I saw a black bird* differs from the meaning of *blackbird* in *I saw a blackbird*. In the first sentence, *black bird* means a bird that is black, a bird of any possible species. In the second sentence, *blackbird* refers to a particular species of bird. In the first sentence, the adjective *black* modifies the noun *bird*, and together *black bird* is a noun phrase (NP). In the second, *blackbird* is a noun, and more specifically a compound noun, as illustrated schematically below.

- a. [black] + [bird] adjective + noun
- b. [blackbird] compound noun

Compounds can be of any open-class category—noun, verb, adjective, or adverb. There also exist compound prepositions, and prepositions form the parts of compounds of other categories (for example, *outsource* is a preposition + verb compound of the category verb). Pronouns can also occur in compounds (*whoever*), as can quantifiers such as *some* or *every* (*someone*, *everything*), and there exist a number of historical examples of compound adverbs such as *herewith* and *thereupon*. Table 6.1 lists more compounds from all of the major parts of speech categories, illustrating the wide variety of types.

Notice that there is no consistent spelling or punctuation of compounds; they can occur with hyphens, as separate words, or spelled out as a single word. As discussed in Chapter 4, one way to recognize many compounds is by stress patterns; typically, compound stress falls on the first word in the compound, allowing us to distinguish compounds from phrases.

- a. black bírd, bláckbird
- b. green hóuse, gréenhouse

Table 6.1

Common Compound Words by Type

Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs	Prepositions
blackbird	childlike	blackmail	downward	into
horsefly	ready-to-wear	overact	upward	onto
peanut butter	well-off	downsize	therefore	without
six-pack	upright	update	however	toward
daughter-in-law	single-minded	outsource	furthermore	within

This is not always the case; here are a few interesting exceptions and dialectal variations:

- a. *ú*grade, *u*plift
- b. *á*pple cake, apple *pie*
- c. *í*ce cream, whipped *créam*

Compounds are typically affixed just as any other words, providing evidence that we do store them in our mental lexicons as single words; they can take plural *-s*, possessive *'s*, past tense *-ed*, present participle *-ing*, and so on.

- a. blackbirds, six-packs, horseflies
- b. whitewashing, outsourcing, downsized

Often-cited exceptions to this generalization include *sister-in-law*, *attorney general*, *master-at-arms*, and *heir apparent*. These compounds are unusual for English because they are “head-first” compounds, with the modifier of the head (the adjective or the prepositional phrase) following the head (the noun). Compounds are pluralized in two ways. The plurals in group (a) are perhaps more prescriptively correct, though the plurals in group (b) also occur, particularly in oral language, and are perhaps more common.

- | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a. three <u>sisters</u> -in-law | b. three sister-in-laws |
| six <u>attorneys</u> general | six attorney <u>generals</u> |
| two <u>heirs</u> apparent | two heir <u>apparents</u> |

Attorney-general is derived from French, where the adjective *general* follows the noun it modifies. English speakers, however, have English, not French, intuitions about morphological rules and thus treat *attorney general* just like *famous general*, where *famous* precedes *general* (not the other way around). The fact that both options for pluralization of such compounds exist can be accounted for by proposing that the group (b) plurals are “natural” and conform to speakers’ descriptive rules of English but that the group (a) pluralization is learned the same way as other prescriptive rules, or are at least consciously analyzed by the speaker.

The meaning of many compounds is fairly transparent; a *blackbird* is a type of bird, and a *supermom* is a type of mom. The meanings of other compounds are not so obvious, however. A *blockhead* is not someone whose head is shaped like a block, nor is to *backstab* someone to physically harm them with a sharp implement.

German, in particular, uses compounds as a way of forming new words, ending up with some impressively long ones:

- a. Donaudampfschiffahrtsgesellschaftskapitän
 Donau - dampf - schiff - fahrt - gesellschaft - kapitän
 Danube steam ship operate society captain
 ‘captain of a boat belonging to the Danube Steamship Company’

b. Ausländerbehördebürostunden

Aus - länder - behörde - büro - stunden
 out country (pl.) officials office hours
 'hours of the immigration office'

c. Rehunterkieferbackenzahnanteil

Reh - unter - kiefer - backen - zahn - teil
 deer lower jaw cheek tooth section
 'piece of the deer's lower jaw with the teeth intact' (in order to tell the age of the animal)

RPE 6.6

eponym word that comes from the name of a person associated with it

Eponyms

Another way we create new words is by creating **eponyms**, or words from names of (usually) famous people, and the words' meanings relate to something specific about them or their experiences. Consider the Pythagorean theorem (a geometric equation named for the Greek mathematician Pythagoras), the system of Braille used for the blind (named for the Frenchman Louis Braille, who invented it), Morse code (a communication system invented by Samuel Morse for use with the telegraph), and hundreds more. Some examples of eponyms are obviously from names, even if we are not certain of their origins (Achilles' heel, Reyes syndrome, Orwellian), but others are less so; *algorithm*, *bloomers*, *gerrymander*, *leotard*, and *saxophone* are all words that come from names.

Eponyms also come from brand names. For example, many of us refer to tissues of any brand as *Kleenex*, an original facial tissue brand name, to any petroleum jelly as *Vaseline*, to all cotton swabs as *Q-tips*, and to all MP3 players as *iPods*.

Some brand-name eponyms are recognizable, but many are so integrated into the language that we aren't aware they were ever brand names at all.

RPE 6.7

retronym word that provides a new name for something to differentiate the original word from a more recent form or version

Retonyms

Another type of word formation, called a **retronym** (a term first coined by journalist Frank Mankiewicz in 1980 and then popularized by *New York Times* columnist William Safire) provides a new name for something to differentiate the original word from a more recent form or version. The original word typically gains a modifier, rather than being completely replaced by a new word, to account for developments of the object or concept—for example, *analog watch* to differentiate from *digital watch*, or *acoustic guitar* as distinct from *electric guitar*.

hwæt!

Brand names are usually registered (like trademarks and copyrights) so that using them without the owner's permission is illegal—but you're not likely to get arrested for saying *Kleenex*.

Blends

blend (portmanteau) word made from putting parts of two words together

RPE 6.8

Another common word formation process involves telescoping two words together, as Lewis Carroll does in the nonsense poem "Jabberwocky," in which he creates *slithy* from *lithe* and *slimy*. Other examples of **blends**, also called **portmanteau** words, include the following: *apathetic* (from *apathy* + *pathetic*), *permafrost* (*permanent* + *frost*), *transistor* (*transfer* + *resistor*), *hassle* (*haggle* + *tussle*), *prissy* (*prim* + *sissy*), *blog* (*web* + *log*), *schmoodle* (*schmoozer* + *poodle*), and *brunch* (*breakfast* + *lunch*).

Conversions

conversion change of a word's syntactic category without changing form, such as a noun becoming a verb

hwæt!

Portmanteau, French for a kind of folding suitcase (a blend of *porter* 'to carry' and *manteau* 'coat'), was first used by Lewis Carroll in 1882 to refer to blended words, such as those he used in his poem "Jabberwocky."

Sometimes we create words by simply assigning them another syntactic category. For example, from the noun *mother* we have created the verb *mother* (and similarly *father* and *parent*), and from the noun *trash* we have the verb (to) *trash*. Such **conversions**, also called functional shifts, happen in a variety of ways; we can convert a noun to a verb as with *mother*, *trash*, *google*, or *friend*; or we can convert a verb to a noun, as in *impact*, *commute*, *blackmail*, *e-mail*, and *fax*. We also convert adjectives to verbs, as in *to savage* or *to total*, and adjectives to nouns, as in *a crazy*.

Some conversions induce a change in stress, though such stress patterns often vary dialectally.

verbs: transfér, permít, convért, pervért, commúne

nouns: transfér, pérmít, cónvert, pérvert, cómmune

Conversions are quite common in English. Both words often become established, and then it is not obvious which word came first unless you look them up in a dictionary. For example, the noun *electronic mail*, which soon became simply *e-mail*, almost immediately become a verb as well: *She e-mailed me about the meeting*.

RPE 6.9

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Language Alive!

Blimey!

All of the following words were once longer phrases.

- *Howdy* came from *how do you do*.
- *Goodbye* came from *God be with you*.
- The word *blimey*, more common in British English, came from *God blame me* (or maybe *God blind me*).
- And the slightly archaic word *druthers* came from *would rather* as in *I would rather* and shifted from a verb phrase to a noun: *If I had my druthers*, we wouldn't go to the fair.

The process that reduces a longer phrase to a single word usually takes a long time, sometimes hundreds of years. You can see this process taking place over about 300 years with the word *goodbye* in the following quotes from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (given with the year they appeared in a text and the author's name):

- 1588 I thanke your worship, *God be wy you*. (William Shakespeare)
 1591 *God b'uy* my Lord. (William Shakespeare)
 1600 Gallants, *God buoye* all. (William Shakespeare)
 1602 I so, *God buy' ye* (William Shakespeare)
 1604 *God buy to you*. (William Shakespeare)
 1607 *God b'y you* Mistresse Gallipot. (Thomas Middleton and Thomas Dekker)
 1652 Heartily *Godbuy*, good Mr. Crasy. (Richard Brome)
 1659 . . . his strength will scarce supply His Back to the Balcona, so *God b' wy* (Samuel Pepys)
 1694 He flings up his tail . . . and so bids us *good-b'wy*. (John Cleveland)
 1707 So to a Feast should I invite ye You'd stuff your Guts, and cry, *Good bwi't'ye*. (Edward Ward)
 1719 *Good B' w''y!* with all my Heart. (Thomas D'Urfey)
 1818 And so your humble servant, and *good-b'ye!* (George Gordon Byron)
 1860 We then bade Ulrich *good-bye*, and went forward. (John Tyndall)
 1874 Then he said *good-bye* to me . . . and so left me. (Francis Burnand)

And now we just say "bye!"

Acronyms

acronym word formed from abbreviations of other words

Acronyms are abbreviations that can be formed in two ways. First, words can be formed from initial letters of each part of a compound word or phrase and then pronounced as the words they become: SARS and NASA are examples.

SARS	severe acute respiratory syndrome
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration

hwæt!

A handy place to look up unfamiliar acronyms is the website all-acronyms.com. Beware, though, that it claims no absolute authority on the etymology and definitions.

Humvee HMMWV (high-mobility multipurpose wheeled vehicle)
 LARPlive action role-playing game
 WASP white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant
 ROM read-only memory
 NIMBY not in my backyard
 FAQs frequently asked questions

Some acronyms have become so ingrained in the language that we may no longer know what the letters once stood for; they have also usually lost their uppercase letters in the acronym.

laser light amplification by the stimulated emission of radiation
 radar radio detecting and ranging
 scuba self-contained underwater breathing apparatus
 snafu situation normal all fouled up

initialism word formed from the initial letters of a group of words (CD)

The second type of acronym is the **initialism**, a word created by initial letters, which is pronounced with the letter names: DVD, FBI, CIA. Here are some familiar initialisms (also called abbreviations):

WMD weapons of mass destruction
 OMG Oh my God
 DVD digital versatile/video disk
 NCAA National Collegiate Athletic Association
 NPR National Public Radio
 brb be right back (primarily used in online communication)
 lol laughing out loud (primarily used in online communication)

We can also distinguish *orthographic initialisms* or *abbreviations*, in which the written word is a shortening of some other word, but we pronounce the whole word rather than the abbreviated form:

Jr., Dr., Mrs., Mr., wt. (for *weight*), g (for *gram*), state names—AZ, TN, WA, NY

hwæt!

Ever wonder why *lb.* is the abbreviation for *pound* and *oz.* is the abbreviation for *ounce*? *Lb.* is an abbreviation of the first word of the Latin phrase *libra ponda*, which was an equivalent measurement for the Romans. And *ounce* was spelled *onza* in fifteenth-century Italian, when it came into common use in Europe, and was thus abbreviated *oz.*

A subtype of initialism is a word formed from letters within a word rather than from separate words.

TV/tv television

The initialism *ID*, taken from the first two letters of *identification*, has become a root word that can take an affix:

They were IDing everyone at the door.

Other languages also use a lot of acronyms and abbreviations. An example from French is SAMU, which comes from *Service d'Aide Médicale Urgent*, the agency people call in medical emergencies. And one from Spanish (which has a great many acronyms), is SEAT (pronounced [se-at]) for *Sociedad Español de Automóviles y Turismo*.

Language Alive!

Ms.

When you see *Ms.* written on something, how do you say it, and what does it mean? If you see it as a choice on a form along with *Mr.* and *Mrs.*, you might think it's an abbreviation. But it's not an abbreviation. The definition and etymology from the *Oxford English Dictionary* follows:

Ms. *n.* A title of courtesy prefixed to the surname of a woman, sometimes with her first name interposed. *Ms.* has been adopted esp. in formal and business contexts as an alternative to *Mrs* and *Miss* principally as a means to avoid having to specify a woman's marital status (regarded as irrelevant, intrusive, or potentially discriminatory).

Some examples from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, going as far back as 1932, show its various uses as well as the conscious attempt to integrate it into the language in order to treat women and men equally.

1932: In addressing by letter a woman whose marital status is in doubt, should one write 'M's' or 'Miss'? (*New York Times*, May 29)

1949: Feminists . . . have often proposed that the two present-day titles be merged into 'Miss' (to be written 'Ms.'), with a plural 'Misses' (written 'Mss.'). (Mario Pei, *Story of Language*)

1952: Use abbreviation *Ms.* for all women addressees. This modern style solves an age-old problem. (*Simplified Letter*, publication of the National Office Management Association, Philadelphia)

1974: The Passport Office yesterday conceded the right to women to call themselves *Ms* (pronounced *Miz*) on their passports instead of *Mrs.* or *Miss.* (*London Daily Telegraph*, May 21)

The creation of this word is an example of a successful attempt at word manipulation for a political or social reason.

German also has many acronyms, though it tends to take a letter or two more than the initial letter of the word to make the new word easily pronounceable. So, *haribo*, the name of a gummy bear candy company, comes from Hans Riegel in Bonn, the founder. And *KaDeWe* is a big, well-known department store in Berlin whose name comes from Kaufhaus des Westens.

Clipping

Another way to create words is to omit syllables (rather than morphemes). This process, called **clipping**, is the source of the following:

clipping making a word by omitting syllables in an existing word (e.g., *rad* from *radical*)

pantaloons	→	pants
streptococcus	→	strep

brother	→	bro
mathematics	→	math

It is typically the first syllable that becomes the word, but not always, as the following examples show.

influenza	→	flu
chrysanthemum	→	mum

Other languages also use clipping to form new words. The following examples of clipping are from German:

Mathemathik	→	Mathe	‘math’
AutoBus	→	Bus	‘bus’
Bibliothek	→	Bib	‘library’
Extempore	→	Ex	‘pop quiz’

RPE 6.10

Backformation

backformation
making a new word
by omitting what
appears to be a
morpheme (usually
a suffix or prefix)
but actually isn't

Unless we know the history of a word, it is nearly impossible to tell which words are formed through **backformation**, even though many words enter the language in this way. Backformation is a process by which a word is formed by omitting what appears to be a morpheme but which in reality is not. For example, *edit* is a backformation from *editor*, and *scavenge* is backformed from *scavenger*. Both *editor* and *scavenger* came into English from other languages: *editor* from Latin *editus* and *scavenger* from Old French *scawager*. Note the /n/ that was inserted from the French word to the English word; this by analogy with other words like *messenger* (French, *messenger*) and *passenger* (French, *passager*). Although each of these words ends in *-er*, this *-er* is not equivalent to the *-er* affix that means ‘one who does X’, as in *driver* and *teacher*, where the *-er* is affixed to the verbs *drive* and *teach*. However, English speakers, by analogy, nevertheless unconsciously analyzed *scavenger* and *editor* as ending in the familiar “agentive” *-er* and backformed the verbs *edit* and *scavenge*. Similar examples, from the same historical contact with French, include *cobble*, *hawk*, *swindle*, and *burgle*, from *cobbler*, *hawker*, *swindler*, and *burglar*. Another historical example is *pease*, originally a mass noun (a noun that can't be counted—much *pease* is in the pot) and now interpreted as count (so now many *peas* are in the pot is what we say). You may be familiar with the nursery rhyme “Pease porridge hot. Pease porridge cold. Pease porridge in the pot, nine days old,” an example of the older form *pease*.

Still other, more recent examples of backformations include the following: *spectate*, *resurrect*, *enthuse*, *peoplewatch*, *backform*, *couth*, *statistic*, *intuit*, *babysit*, *televise*, *liaise*, *sightsee*, *typewrite*, *orientate*. Some may be more acceptable or standard, but all are formed by the same morphological process.

Reduplication

reduplication
making a word by
doubling an entire
free morpheme
(total reduplication)
or part of it (partial
reduplication)

Reduplication is the process of forming new words by doubling either an entire free morpheme (total reduplication) or part of it (partial reduplication). English doesn't use reduplication very productively to form new words, though it does use a version of reduplication in certain expressions and in baby talk to form words related to or derived from the original meaning of a word (e.g., *wa-wa* from *water*).

knock knock, hocus-pocus, hoity-toity, tutti-frutti, bye bye, mama, dada, boo-boo, wawa (for *water*)

Other languages use reduplication much more productively. Indonesian uses total reduplication to form the plurals of nouns.

rumah	'house'	rumahrumah	'houses'
ibu	'mother'	ibuibu	'mothers'

Pangasinan, a language of the Philippines, uses partial reduplication to indicate plural.

bale	'town'	balbale	'towns'
lupa	'face'	luplupa	'faces'
sondalo	'soldier'	sonsondalo	'soldiers'

Lushootseed, among other Salish language of the Pacific Northwest and British Columbia, uses reduplication in all sorts of ways. Let's look at two of them.

The *diminutive* morpheme doubles the initial consonant and vowel of the stem and results in a diminutive interpretation, as indicated by the following translations.

ʔálʔal	house	ʔáʔálʔal	hut
ʔúqʷud	pull out	ʔúʔúqʷud	pull part way out
híwil	go ahead	híhíwil	go on ahead a bit
q'íxʷ	upstream	q'íq'íxʷ	upstream a little bit

And the morphology of the so-called out-of-control form results from doubling the final consonant and vowel of the stem, resulting in interpretations like the following.

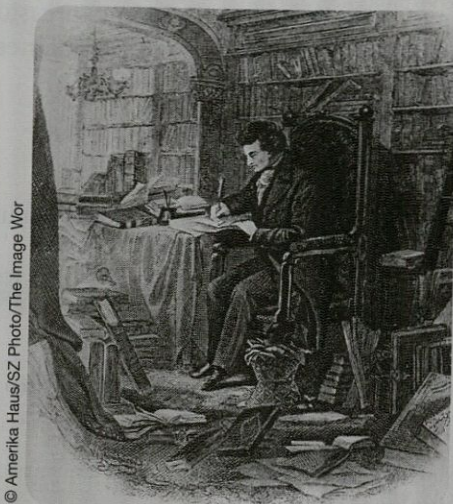
ʔát	fast, quickly	ʔátát	hurry up!
dʰáq'	fall, topple	dʰáq'áq'	stagger, totter
čəx	split	čəxəx	cracked to pieces
yúbil	starve	yúbúbil	tired out, sick

An example of reduplication that has come into English from Hawaiian is *wikiki*, meaning 'quick'. It is quickly gaining new meanings and functions (*We set up a wiki; Just wiki it*), however, and it is now used as a prefix, as in *wikipedia* and *wiktionary*. Or are these blends?

RPE 6.11

RPE 6.12

Accent on Lexicographers



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Who writes dictionaries? Lexicographers provide the definitions, etymologies, clues to pronunciation, examples of use, and even syntactic uses. They are well educated and interested, even expert, in many areas—language and languages, history, culture, and so on. The job has changed quite a bit since the seventeenth century, when lexicographers were starting their work.

Commissioned to ‘fix’ and improve English, Samuel Johnson published pretty much single-handedly the *Dictionary of the English Language* in 1755. Noah Webster, pictured above, labored alone to publish *A Compendious Dictionary of the English Language* in 1806; one of his goals was to distinguish American from British English. He created many American spellings: *color*, *center*, *program*, and *catalog*, among others.

James Murray strove to compile a dictionary that would map out, with scientific accuracy, the history and meaning of English words, not only in England and America but around the world. Editors working with him collected 3.5 million citation slips submitted by a small army

of volunteers for the *Oxford English Dictionary*. The *OED* was published in installments from 1884 to 1928. When Murray died in 1915, after thirty-seven years as its editor, the *OED* had only reached the letter *T*.

The *OED*’s editors helped change the lexicographer’s role from prescriptive to much more descriptive, aiming to discover and document the language real people use, though it was still based on written, not spoken, language.

It might be surprising to learn that the *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English* was first published in 1937. Its editor, Eric Partridge, devoted his life to writing about some of the more curious aspects of language and thus perpetuated an interest in documenting *all* aspects of language, both standard and nonstandard.

The current editors are at work on the last volume of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*, which documents those ways in which our regional language varieties are distinct from each other; it focuses on the spoken rather than the written language. Lexicographer Frederic Cassidy was chief editor of this dictionary from its inception in 1965 until his death in 2000.

A distinct kind of dictionary has emerged that focuses more directly on usage. *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary of English Usage*, for example, arranges in dictionary format a collection of “common problems of confused or disputed English usage from two perspectives: . . . historical background . . . and . . . present-day usage” (preface). It tackles such things as the distinction between *infer* and *imply*, *indubitably* and *undoubtedly*, *orientate* and *orient*.

Mass literacy, global communication, and technology have guaranteed the ongoing demand for dictionaries and have changed the

Erin McKean



way in which lexicographers compile and we retrieve information; search engines seek words or phrases from thousands of sources in a matter of seconds. Erin McKean, pictured here, has used all of these modern tools as an editor for American dictionaries at Oxford University Press and founder of Wordnik.com.

We don't always know today's lexicographers by name; there are so many of them working on diverse dictionary projects. They all, however, maintain a fascination with words, their histories, and their use.

For more information

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Summary

In this chapter, we've gone beyond the borders of English affixation to look at the morphological properties of other languages. We've seen that languages can be classified by their morphological type as analytic or synthetic or on a continuum between these two types. English, in fact, is mostly analytic but has some synthetic properties, too. We've also discussed a wide range of morphological processes other than affixation, processes that allow us to continually and creatively add new words to our language and alter the meanings and structure of existing ones. Our discussion of regular word formation rules, such as compounding, as well as other nonsystematic ways of adding new words, such as eponyms and acronyms, clearly illustrates our enormous capacity for creativity in language and that language is a dynamic, ever-changing system.

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Review, Practice, and Explore

RPE 6.1 Analytic? Synthetic?

- A. In the Lushootseed (dx^wlǝʃucid) language, the place name *Skykomish* can be broken down into the following morphemes. Based on this word, would you classify this language as more analytic or synthetic?

Skykomish

sq'ix^wabš

s-q'ix^w- abš

nominalizer—located upstream—people of
'upstream people'

- B. Explain how this example from Chinese is illustrative of an analytic rather than a synthetic language.

我	所有	的	朋友	都	要	吃	才	蛋
wǒ	suǒyǒu	de	péngyou	dōu	yào	chī	jī	dàn
I	all	possessive	friend(s)	all	want	eat	chicken	egg(s)

'My friends all want to eat eggs.'

- C. Conduct some research on a language—perhaps one that you have studied—and determine what type of language it is. Is it more analytic or synthetic? Does it exhibit characteristics of a fusional language? An agglutinative language? Be sure to give examples and to label the morphemes.

RPE 6.2 Japanese as Synthetic and Analytic

Japanese has agglutinative (synthetic) verbs but analytic nouns. Conduct some research on Japanese, collect examples of verbs and nouns, and illustrate those aspects that are synthetic and those that are analytic. If you find other examples of languages that share features of more than one language type, discuss those as well.

RPE 6.3 Analyzing Yoruba Nasals

Recall the discussion in Chapter 4 of the various phonological processes that change one sound into another. Such processes are at work in Yoruba, leading to several different forms, called allomorphs, of the progressive morpheme. Based on the following data, what is the form of the progressive morpheme (equivalent to English *-ing*) in each set of Yoruba verbs? The English translations are given only in the infinitive. (Adapted from Cowan & Kakušan, 1985: 79)

present	progressive	
bá	ńbá	'to meet'
bé	ńbé	'to cut off'
bérò	ńbérò	'to fear'
bò	ńbò	'to cover'
bù	ńbù	'to cut'

progressive morpheme =

dà	ńdà	'to pour'
dé	ńdé	'to arrive'
dì	ńdì	'to tie'
dìkpò	ńdìkpò	'to replace'
dúró	ńdúró	'to stand'

progressive morpheme =

kà	ɲkà	'to fold'
kàn	ɲkàn	'to touch'
kó	ɲkó	'to gather'
kù	ɲkù	'to remain'

progressive morpheme =

What kind of phonological process accounts for the different forms, or *allomorphs*, of the progressive morpheme in Yoruba?

RPE 6.4 Analyzing Iraqi Arabic Noun Stems

Based on the data in Set 1, what is the possessive morpheme in Iraqi Arabic? (Adapted from Cowan & Kakušan 1985: 88-89)

Set 1

Nonpossessive

walad
qalam
balad
tanak
jaras

possessive (my)

waladi 'son'
qalami 'pencil'
baladi 'town'
tanaki 'tin'
jarasi 'bell'

possessive morpheme =

Now consider the following data. Assume that the form of the possessive morpheme doesn't change, and that a phonological process applies to the nouns in Set 2 to derive their forms (which are different from the forms of the nouns in Set 1). What is that process and why does it occur?

Set 2

Nonpossessive

šaʕar
bayʕal
laḥam
taxat
šaʕab

possessive (my)

šaʕri 'hair'
bayli 'mule'
laḥmi 'meat'
taxti 'bench'
šaʕbi 'people'

RPE 6.5 Slang

- Using the slang dictionaries in your library and online, discuss the origins and evolution of three slang words. If the words are still in use and the current meaning is related to or derived from the older meaning, discuss how their meanings have changed.
- Define and discuss three slang terms that you and your friends know and use. Are they listed in the slang dictionary? If they are, do they have the same meaning as your definitions? Do you think your slang words will be around in 10 years? Twenty years? Why or why not? See if you can determine the origins of your slang terms.

In your discussion, try to answer the following questions:

- What criteria do we use to define a word as slang?
- What role do dictionaries play in defining a word as slang?
- What is the difference between slang terms and dialect variation?

RPE 6.6 Compounds

Sometimes it isn't obvious whether a group of words is a compound word or not. Consider the following:

cab ride
iron gate
paperback book
paperback novel
life insurance premium
barking dog

Are these compound nouns? Why or why not? What kinds of tests can you use to find out whether they are compounds or not?

RPE 6.7 Eponyms

- A. Choose at least five of the following eponyms, look them up in a good etymological dictionary such as *A New Dictionary of Eponyms* (Oxford University Press), and write a summary of each word's meaning and origin.
- badminton, cardigan, derringer, forsythia, gorilla, hollandaise, jodhpurs, limousine, mackinaw, tuxedo, volt, welch, zeppelin, Amber alert, Enronomics, Casanova, Dear John, Dear Abby, jack-of-all-trades, boycott, Martha moment, Starbucks, John Hancock, quisling, John Doe, bogart, Uncle Tom, Aunt Jemima, Electra, oedipal, Ophelia, the Atkins, (to be) borked
- B. Consider the following words, which all originally came from brand names. Which of these do you use as the generic name for the item?
- escalator, granola, cellophane, zipper, yo-yo, linoleum, kerosene, jungle gym, dumpster, frisbee, chapstick, port-a-potty, xerox, Q-tip, band-aid, taser, ping-pong

RPE 6.8 Blends

What do the following words mean, and what words did they come from?

skullet, pomo, modem, spork

Come up with two other blends, and give the words that they are blended from.

RPE 6.9 Creative Morphology in Poetry

Poet Charles Wright employs a number of word formation processes in his work. One such process in particular is illustrated in the following boldface words from his poetry. What is the word formation he uses? Explain briefly.

- A. From "Black and Blue":
- Like deer in a leafy light,
window and looking glass,
Yesterdays flash and reflect,
Ready to bolt, ready to empty out.
Horizon them black and blue.

B. From "Chickamauga":

History handles our past like spoiled fruit.
 Mid-morning, late-century light
calicoed under the peach trees.
 Fingers us here. Fingers us here and here.

C. From "Meditation on Song and Structure":

In North Carolina, half a century ago,
 Bird song over black water,
 Lake Llewellyn **Bibled** and night-colored,
 mockingbird
 Soul-throated, like light, a little light in great darkness.

D. From "Meditation on Song and Structure":

The afternoon breaking away in little pieces,
 Siren's squeal from the bypass,
 The void's tattoo, *Nothing Matters*,
mottoed across our white hearts?

Below are two more examples from the poetry of Charles Wright of a word formation process discussed in the chapter. What process is Wright using in excerpts E and F?

E. From "A Short History of the Shadow":

Now into June, cloverheads tight, **Seurating**¹ the yard.

F. From "Journal of English Days":

November's my favorite month,
 the downside of autumn
 And winter in first array, the sky
Constabled² now and again
 Over Kensington Gardens:
 north of the Serpentine,

RPE 6.10 Clippings

Here are a few clippings not mentioned in the chapter:

jag, memo, typo, lab, gas

Determine what words each of these came from. Come up with three more examples of words formed by clipping.

RPE 6.11 Duplicate Reduplication

A relatively recent phenomenon in English is the doubling of certain words and phrases to create a new meaning. So someone might say, "No, I don't like like him" or "Yes, she's my girlfriend girlfriend," which seem to be used to contrast one meaning of a word with another. Come up

1. Reference is to Georges Seurat's pointillist paintings (e.g., *Le Pont de Courbevoie*).

2. Reference is to John Constable.

with several other examples of words that can do this kind of reduplication, and explain how the doubling of these words changes the meaning of the original word. Describe any limitations on the reduplication (which words can do it, which can't) and therefore how productive a process it is.

RPE

6.12

Forming New Words

Recall the following word formation processes used in English: affixation, compounding, blending, clipping, acronyms, eponyms, conversions, backformations, and reduplication.

Now, consider the following words from Word Spy and previous nominees for the American Dialect Society's Word of the Year.

chugger, bridezilla, NIMBY, manscaping, crittercam, nanopublishing, furkid, tofurkey, refudiate

Explain which process of word formation has applied in each word. Look up the meaning of each word; if you can find no meaning, make one up!