



Minor types of word-formation

Lecture 9.

§1. Shortening / clipping

- **significant subtraction**, in which part of the original word or word group is taken away.
- the reduction of a word to one of its parts (whether or not this part has previously been a morpheme), as a result of which the new form **acquires some linguistic value** of its own.

demo from *demonstration*

fridge from *refrigerator*

vac from *vacuum cleaner*



Causes of shortening

- "the strain of modern life"
- the demands of rhythm
- loan word assimilation
- Need for stylistic/emotional colouring

Characteristics of the new word

- No phonetic changes, but may be spelling changes
dub (*double*), *mike* (*microphone*), *trank* (*tranquilizer*)

- Give rise to new words

vacuum cleaner → *a vac* → *to vac*

fancy n (from *fantasy*), *fancy* v, *fancier* n, *fanciful* a, *fancifully* adv, *fancifulness* n, *fancy-ball* n, *fancy-dress* n, *fancy-work* (a word-family)

- Belongs to the same part of speech as the prototype.

- Usually follows the syllabic principle of word division,
pep (sl.) 'vigour', 'spirit' from *pepper*, or *plane* from *aeroplane*

exceptions:

prep (school sl.) 'homework' from *preparation*

- Have pronounced stylistic colouring as long as their connection with the prototype is alive, so that they remain synonyms

hanky from *handkerchief*; *ma* from *mama*; *nightie* from *nightdress* (nursery slang)

Typical English patterns

- Most shortened words are **nouns**
- **Verbs** are rarely shortened, but for *to rev* from *to revolve* and *to tab* from *to tabulate*
to phone, to taxi, to vac, to vet are not curtailed, but converted words
- Shortened **adjectives** are very few and mostly reveal a combined effect of shortening and suffixation
comfy (comfortable), dilly (delightful), imposs (impossible), mizzy (miserable)

The correlation of a curtailed word with its prototype

1. The curtailed form is a **variant or a synonym** differing from the full form quantitatively, stylistically and sometimes emotionally

doc (doctor), exam (examination), Becky (Rebecca), Frisco (San Francisco), Japs (the Japanese).

- can substitute their prototypes
- render one of the possible meanings of the prototype (are monosemantic)

to dub (from double) 'to make another sound recording in a cinema film in a different language'.

2. The curtailed form is a **separate word**, the denotative or lexico-grammatical meaning of it being very different

fan (from a fanatic); fancy (fantasy); miss (mistress).

- develop semantic structures of their own

Types of shortening

According to the clipped part:

- 1) **final clipping** (or apocope)

ad, advert (advertisement); coke (coca-cola); ed (editor); fab (fabulous)

- 2) **initial clipping** (or apharesis) creates separate lexical units with a meaning very different from that of the prototype

cute a, n (Am) (acute); to mend (amend); a story (history); to tend (attend).

Final and initial clipping may be combined (only the middle part remains).

flu (influenza); frig or fridge (refrigerator); tec (detective)

- 3) **medial clipping** (or syncope)

maths (mathematics), specs (spectacles)

§ 2. Ellipsis

is the omission of a word or words considered essential for grammatical completeness but not for the conveyance of the intended lexical meaning (shortening of phrases chiefly set expressions).

sitdown (sitdown demonstration)

daily (daily newspaper)

finals (final examinations)

perm (permanent wave)

pop (popular music)

§ 3. Blending / telescoping

Blends (fusions, portmanteau words) are words that **combine two words and include the letters or sounds they have in common** as a connecting element.

They have the first constituent represented by a stem whose final part may be missing, and the second constituent - by a stem of which the initial part is missing.

breakfast + lunch = brunch

Bit (the fundamental unit of information) short for *binary digit*

bloodalyzer and ***breathalyzer*** for apparatuses making blood and breath tests

slimnastics (blend of *slim* and *gymnastics*)

Types of blends

■ Additive blends

transformable into a phrase consisting of the respective complete stems combined by the conjunction *and*:

smoke + fog = smog 'a mixture of smoke and fog'.

French + English = Frenglish

slang + language = slanguage

■ Restrictive blends

transformable into an attributive phrase where the first element serves as modifier of the second

medicare ← *medical care*;

positron ← *positive electron*;

telecast ← *television broadcast*

motel ← *motorists' hotel*



§ 4. Abbreviation and acronymy

words formed from the initial letter or letters of each of the successive parts of a phrasal term

Types of orthoepic correlation between written and spoken forms

1) **Acronym** is a written form which reads as an ordinary English word

UNO ['junou] — United Nations Organization

NATO — the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SALT — Strategic Arms Limitation Talks.

*laser - light amplification by stimulated emission
radiation*

2) **Initial abbreviation** with the alphabetical reading, i.e. pronounced as a series of letters.

B.B.C. ['bi:'bi:'si:] — the British Broadcasting Corporation

M.P. ['em'pi:] - Member of Parliament

P.M. - Prime Minister

S.O.S. ['es'ou'es] — Save Our Souls, a wireless Morse code-signal of extreme distress

3) **Shortened form** of a written word or phrase used in a text in place of the whole **for economy of space and effort**. **In oral speech the unabbreviated words are pronounced**

bldg for building,

govt for government,

wd for word

ltd for limited,

B.A. for Bachelor of Arts,

N. Y. for New York State

■ some with alteration

oz (ounce);

Xmas (Christmas)

■ doubling of initial letters shows plural forms

pp/p.p. (pages)

4) **Latin abbreviations** which sometimes are not read as Latin words but substituted by their English equivalents.

a.m. (Lat *ante meridiem*) — *in the morning*;

cf. (Lat *conferre*) - *compare*;

e.g. (Lat *exempli gratia*) - *for example*;

ib(id) (Lat *ibidem*) — *in the same place*;

i.e. (Lat *id est*) - *that is*

Actual letters are also read in the cases:

a.m. ['ei'em], *e.g.*, *i.e.*, *p.m.*

5) abbreviations **for famous persons' names** and surnames

*George Bernard Shaw is often alluded to as G.B.S.
['dʒi:'bi:'es]*

Herbert George Wells as H.G

6) the first element is a letter and the second a complete word.

A-bomb (atomic bomb), V-sign

7) *popular (or jocular) etymology*

Jeep 'a small military motor vehicle' comes from g.p. ['dʒi:'pi:l (the initials of general purpose).

Okay, OK may be an illiterate misinterpretation of the initials in all correct

§ 5. Sound interchange

an opposition in which words or word forms are differentiated due to an alternation in the phonemic composition of the root.

the root vowel change

food – to feed

full – to fill;

whole – to heal;

knot – to knit;

tale – to tell

root consonant change

to speak - speech

life – to live

to bear - burden;

to bite - a bit;

to ride – a road;

to believe – a belief

§ 6. Distinctive stress

In English homographic, mostly disyllabic nouns and verbs of Romanic origin follow one pattern:

'conduct (“behaviour”)

to con'duct (“to lead or guide (in a formal way)”)

accent, impact, compound, conflict, contest, contract, contrast, convict, digest, import, increase, insult, object (subject, project), perfume, permit, present, produce, progress, protest, rebel, record, survey.

Verbs retained this stress as many native disyllabic verbs were also stressed in this way:

be'come, be'lieve for'bid, for'get, for'give.

The native nouns are mostly forestressed and in the process of assimilation many loan nouns came to be stressed on the first syllable.

Same pattern is valid for adjectives and verbs:

'absent – to ab'sent;

'frequent - to fre'quent;

'perfect – to per'fect;

'abstract – to ab'stract.

It is NOT a regular pattern!

**Forestressed
verbs and
nouns:**

*comment,
exile,
figure,
quarrel,
focus,
process,
program*

**Verbs and nouns with
the stress on the
second syllable both:**

*accord,
account,
advance,
amount,
approach,
attack,
attempt,*

*concern,
defeat,
distress,
escape,
exclaim,
research*

§ 7. Sound imitation (onomatopoeia or echoism)

is the naming of an action or thing by a more or less exact reproduction of a sound associated with it.

babble, blob, bubble, flush, gurgle, gush, splash

These words **don't reflect the real sounds directly**, because the same sounds are represented differently in different languages
They are very **expressive** and sometimes it is difficult to tell a noun from an interjection.

Mostly they name **sounds or movements** in **verb** category, but verbs easily turn into nouns:

bang, boom, bump, hum, rustle, smack

Semantically:

- **sounds produced by human beings** in the process of **communication** or in expressing their feelings:

babble, chatter, giggle, grunt, grumble, murmur, mutter, titter, whine, whisper

- **sounds produced by animals**, birds and insects:

buzz, croak, crow, howl, moo, mew, neigh, purr, roar

- **the sound of water**

bubble or splash

- **the noise of metallic things:**

clink, tinkle

- **noise of forceful motion:**

clash, crash, whack, whip, whisk

§ 8. Back-formation

the derivation of new words by subtracting a real or supposed affix from existing words through misinterpretation of their structure

- has only diachronic relevance

beggar → *to beg*,

butler → *to butle*,

typewriter → *to typewrite*

pea comes from ME *pese* ← Lat *pisa*, but the English speakers thought that **sweet peas(e)** was a plural and turned the combination

peas(e) soup into *pea soup*

cherry from OFr *cerise*

The most productive type of back-formation in present-day English is derivation of verbs from compounds that have either *-er* or *-ing* as their last element.

Practical task # 8

1. Match the words and the types of word-formation at work in each case:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>loss</i> (← <i>lose</i>) | a) distinctive stress |
| 2. <i>to vacuum-clean</i> | b) ellipsis |
| 3. <i>to hiss</i> | c) Clipping |
| 4. <i>radar</i> (<i>radio detection and ranging</i>) | d) Blending |
| 5. <i>hi-tech</i> (style) | e) Sound interchange |
| 6. <i>a granny</i> | f) Acronymy |
| 7. <i>a docudrama</i> | g) Abbreviation |
| | h) Back-formation |
| | i) Sound imitation |

2. Is BRUNCH an additive or a restrictive blend?

3. Give a TRUE or False answer

- a) Acronyms differ from abbreviations in that they can be read as ordinary words.
- b) All borrowed disyllabic verbs, when converted into nouns, shift the stress to the first syllable following a common English pattern.
- c) Sound interchange is a currently productive pattern of word-formation.
- d) The word “weekly” with the meaning “a weekly newspaper” is an abbreviation.