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Percorsi Abilitanti

PAS

Coordinamento Scientifico
Didattica della Lingua Inglese

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English Morphology

Word Languages



English is not an inflecting language. It is analytic, or relatively uninflected. During the course of thousands of years, English words have been slowly simplified from the inflected variable forms found in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Russian, and German (synthetic languages), toward invariable forms.

Modern English



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

"the tall man," "the tall woman"

Spanish: el hombre alto, la mujer alta;

Italian: la donna alta, l'uomo alto.

MODERN ENGLISH

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

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

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

MODERN ENGLISH

Flexibility of function



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

Adjective.....

Noun

Verb

Adverb

And preposition.....

MODERN ENGLISH

Flexibility of function



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

Adjective..... **A ROUND TABLE**

Noun **IT'S YOUR ROUND**

Verb **THE YACHT ROUNDED THE BUOY**

Adverb **SHE TURNED ROUND AND RAN BACK HOME**

preposition.....**HE KEPT HIS KEYS ROUND HIS NECK**

MODERN ENGLISH

Flexibility of function

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

MODERN ENGLISH

Openness of vocabulary

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

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

MODERN ENGLISH

Openness of vocabulary

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

Ready creation (new coins): e-mail, e-commerce, spam, database; underground

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

MODERN ENGLISH

Openness of vocabulary



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

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

ROYAL, REGAL, SOVEREIGN, KINGLY

MODERN ENGLISH

How many words??

"The statistics of English are astonishing. Of all the world's languages (which now number some 2,700), it is arguably **the richest in vocabulary**. The compendious *Oxford English Dictionary* lists about **500,000 words**; and **a further half-million technical and scientific terms remain uncatalogued**. According to traditional estimates, neighboring German has a vocabulary of about 185,000 and French fewer than 100,000, including such Franglais as *le snacke-barre* and *le hit-parade*." (Robert McCrum, William Cran, & Robert MacNeil. *The Story of English*. New York: Penguin, 1992: 1)

MODERN ENGLISH

How many words??

"The OED2, the largest English-language dictionary, contains some 290,000 entries with some 616,500 word forms." (Wilton, David. How Many Words Are There In The English Language? Wilton's Word & Phrase Origins. 7 February 2001).

"There is no single sensible answer to this question. It's impossible to count the number of words in a language, because it's so hard to decide what actually counts as a word. Is *dog* one word, or two (a noun meaning 'a kind of animal', and a verb meaning 'to follow persistently')? If we count it as two, then do we count inflections separately too (e.g. *dogs* = plural noun, *dogs* = present tense of the verb). Is *dog-tired* a word, or just two other words joined together? Is *hot dog* really two words, since it might also be written as *hot-dog* or even *hotdog*?" (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/how-many-words-are-there-in-the-english-language>)

The English language in 2014

How many people speak English in the world today?

1st language, 2nd language, Foreign language : ????

1st language 360-450 million (70 m. creole)

2nd language (70 countries where it has a status – Ghana, India, Nigeria, Singapore) 200-800 million (number depends on fluency and on what's happening in India). The good guess is 400 m.

Foreign language, 120 countries: 600-1.000 million learning English (China & Olympic Games made a big increase)

DISTINCTION BETWEEN 2nd and FOREIGN is difficult
NIGERIA-GHANA vs. Sweden & Netherlands.....

The English language in 2012

Overall: an estimate of 1500-1600 million speak English

The world population is today 6 bn

This means that 1 in 3 or 1 in 4 now are speaking English, and that..

...for every 1 native speaker there are 3 or 4 non-native speakers

Moreover, the population growth rate of non-native speakers' countries is higher...

So the ratio is going to grow in favour of non-native speakers of English, like us Italian students!!!

Global English- English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

The language of non-native speakers will soon become the language of international communication

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THIS?

- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Grammar

The English we teach and learn will change.

Certain pronunciations and errors will be accepted...

WE MUST BE MORE TOLERANT AND ACCEPT
DIVERSITY

Global English- English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

Why do people want to know English?

WORK

LEISURE AND HOLIDAYS

STUDY (school, university, life long learning)

INTERNET

PERSONAL INTERESTS

..... and contribute to the definition of our identity:

I AM AN ENGLISH SPEAKER

Why is English our Global Language?

It has been the dominant language of science for a long time

It has been the language of powerful nations for many centuries

As the consequence of its global spread, English came to be adopted as an additional language, it began to adapt to the local needs (addition of local vocabulary)

This is why English has probably a larger vocabulary than any other language

GLOBAL ENGLISH

Many people believe that English has a simple structure and a very simple morphology. Because of this, it has become a Global Language. Do you agree??

A LANGUAGE BECOMES AN INTERNATIONAL AND GLOBAL LANGUAGE ONLY FOR ONE REASON:

The power of the people who speak it

A combination of political/military, scientific/technological, economic, and cultural power has led to English achieving its present dominant position (Crystal, 2009. *Global English*)

The main branches of grammar



Two domains: MORPHOLOGY and SYNTAX

Morphology deals with the structure of words (inflectional endings and the way words can be built from smaller units of language).

Syntax, instead deals with the structure of sentences

The word MORPHOLOGY comes from the Greek *morphe* = form + *logos* = word

The word SYNTAX comes from Latin *syntaxis* and earlier from Greek *syn+assein* = together + arrange = arrange together!!!!

Morphology

Many words, such as *boy, a, yes, person, elephant, problem*

CANNOT BE BROKEN DOWN INTO GRAMMATICAL PARTS

These words are made only of a BASE form (also called ROOT or STEM).

In these cases, all we can do is describe the meaning of these words, and how they are pronounced or spelled (number of syllables, pattern of vowels and consonants)

Morphology

A branch of grammar which studies the Structure of Words. It describes the properties of such diverse words as:

YES

HORSES HORSE - S

TALKING TALK – ING

UNHAPPINESS UN- HAPPI – NESS

ANTI-DIS-ESTABLISH-MENT-ARI-AN-ISM

Morphology

Words can be constructed out of elements, or MORPHEMES, the smallest meaningful elements.

The way morphemes operate in a language provides the subject matter of MORPHOLOGY

When there is a clear sequence of elements, it is easy to analyse words HORSE-S, SUCCESS-FUL.

In many languages (AGGLUTINATING L.), it is quite normal to have long sequences of morphemes:

ANGYAGHLLANGYUGTUQ (Eskimo for "He wants to acquire a big boat")

Morphology



English has not many words of that type.

ANTIDISESTABLISHMENTARIANISM

Agglutinating and inflecting languages, like
LATIN, TURKISH, ESKIMO, ALL AMERICAN
INDIAN LANGUAGES, make widespread use of
morphological variations

WORD FORMATION



AFFIXES are meaningful, dependent elements added both before and after the base form:

1. **PREFIXES** precede the base form;
2. **SUFFIXES** follow the base form.

WORD FORMATION

There are four (4) processes of word formation in ENGLISH:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| 1. Prefixation | DIS-OBEY |
| 2. Suffixation | KIND-NESS |
| 3. Conversion | INCREASE (v+n) |
| 4. Conpounding | DATABASE |

There are also some less usual ways like CLIPPINGS (ad, flu); ACRONYMS (NATO); BLENDS (brunch; fantabulous)

WORD FORMATION

PREFIXES in English have a purely LEXICAL (or derivational) role. They allow the construction of new words, changing the meaning of their base form (root-stem):

un-; de-; anti-; super-

SUFFIXES in English are of 2 kinds:

- a. DERIVATIONAL (lexical) s. change the meaning of the base form (*-ness; -ship; -able*);
- b. INFLECTIONAL s. are purely grammatical (*plural, past, possessive*).

Blends



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

TYPES OF SUFFIX

This table shows the commonest English suffixes, though not all the variant forms (e.g. *-ible* for *-able*). The list of inflectional categories is complete; the list of derivational suffixes has been limited to 50.

Inflectional suffixes

- noun plural, e.g. *-s* (p. 201)
- genitive case, e.g. *'s* (p. 202)
- 3rd person singular, e.g. *-s* (p. 204)
- past tense, e.g. *-ed* (p. 212)
- contracted negative *-n't* (pp. 205, 212)
- contracted verbs, e.g. *'re* (p. 205)
- objective pronoun, e.g. *him* (pp. 203, 210)
- ing* form or present participle (p. 204)
- ed* form or past participle (p. 204)
- er* comparison (pp. 199, 211)
- est* comparison (pp. 199, 211)

Derivational suffixes

- Abstract-noun-makers* (p. 209)
- age* frontage, mileage

- dom* officialdom, stardom
- ery* drudgery, slavery
- ful* cupful, spoonful
- hood* brotherhood, girlhood
- ing* farming, panelling
- ism* idealism, racism
- ocracy* aristocracy
- ship* friendship, membership

Concrete-noun-makers

- eer* engineer, racketeer
- er* teenager, cooker
- ess* waitress, lioness
- ette* kitchenette, usherette
- let* booklet, piglet
- ling* duckling, underling
- ster* gangster, gamester

Adverb-makers (p. 211)

- ly* quickly, happily
- ward(s)* northwards, onwards
- wise* clockwise, lengthwise

Verb-makers (p. 212)

- ate* orchestrate, chlorinate
- en* deafen, ripen
- ify* beautify, certify
- ize/-ise* modernize, advertise

Adjective-/noun-makers

- (p. 211)
- ese* Chinese, Portuguese

- (i)an* republican, Parisian
- ist* socialist, loyalist
- ite* socialite, Luddite

Nouns from verbs

- age* breakage, wastage
- al* refusal, revival
- ant* informant, lubricant
- ation* exploration, education
- ee* payee, absentee
- er* writer, driver
- ing* building, clothing
- ment* amazement, equipment
- or* actor, supervisor

Nouns from adjectives

- ity* rapidity, falsity
- ness* happiness, kindness

Adjectives from nouns

- ed* pointed, blue-eyed
- esque* Kafkaesque
- ful* useful, successful
- ic* atomic, Celtic
- (i)al* editorial, accidental
- ish* foolish, Swedish
- less* careless, childless
- ly* friendly, cowardly
- ous* ambitious, desirous
- y* sandy, hairy

Adjectives from verbs

- able* drinkable, washable
- ive* attractive, explosive

WORD FORMATION

Inflectional suffixes, or morphemes, always occur at the very end of a word, and follow the derivational suffixes, if there are any:

GRACE- s; -d;

**GRACIOUS; GRACIOUSLY;
GRACIOUSNESS; GRACELESS;
GRACELESSNESS-ES;**

THE MORPHEME

The smallest unit of a sentence with an independent function.

Morphemes are not the same as **syllables**:
POSSESS, *STUDY* have only 1 morpheme
(BASE FORM - ROOT- STEM) but **2 syllables**.

The **meaning** or grammatical structure of these 2 words cannot be simplified any further.

POSSESS-ION; POSSESS-ED; RE-POSSESS-ED

THE MORPHEME



Inflectional Morphology studies the way in which words vary (inflect) in order to express grammatical contrasts:

SINGULAR/PLURAL; PAST/PRESENT

Derivational or Lexical Morphology studies the principles governing the construction of new words:

DRINKABLE – DRINK; DISINFECTABLE; DIS-INFECT

Types of Morphemes

FREE MORPHEMES can operate freely in the language, occurring as separate words:

study ; go; yes

BOUND MORPHEMES cannot occur on their own (anti-; -ation; -ment; -s; -ed).

As we have seen, bound morphemes can be
INFLECTIONAL or DERIVATIONAL

Types of Morphemes

INFLECTIONAL morphemes express a grammatical contrast (comparative, superlative, plural, past, possessive, 3rd person singular);

DERIVATIONAL or **LEXICAL** morphemes build new items of vocabulary, combining different elements, both to change word class and to change meaning:

IN-DESCRIBE-ABLE

Inflections: adjectives

Adjective quality is expressed by inflections.

Comparisons can be to the same degree, to a higher degree or to a lower degree:

The base of the adjective is called the

ABSOLUTE FORM: big, happy

Adding –er produces the comparative form;

Adding –est produces the superlative form.

Inflections: adjectives

There are no inflectional ways of expressing the same or lower degrees. These notions are expressed **syntactically** (as in Italian)

*As big as; less interested than;
the least interested of all*

There is also a syntactic – or periphrastic – way of expressing higher degree:

*MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN;
THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF ALL*

Inflections: nouns

Most nouns – VARIABLE NOUNS -have a singular and plural form. In the regular plural form, nouns simply add an –s;

INVARIABLE NOUNS do not show a contrast between singular and plural: JEANS, ECONOMICS, SHEEP

There are only a few hundred nouns with an irregular plural form:

FEET; CHILDREN; WIVES; WOMEN

EXCEPTIONAL PLURALS

There are several groups of native English words which display exceptional plural forms. Although we cannot say why these particular words did not follow the regular pattern, it is at least often possible to see why they have their distinctive form by referring to the types of plural formation found in Old English or Germanic (p. 8).

- Seven nouns change their vowel (a process known as *mutation*, or *umlaut*, p. 19): *man* > *men*, *foot* > *feet*, *goose* > *geese*, *mouse* > *mice*, *woman* > *women*, *tooth* > *teeth*, *louse* > *lice*. The change does not take place when there is a derived sense, as when *louse* refers to a person (*you louses!*) or *mouse* to a character (*we've hired three Mickey Mouses this month*).
- Four nouns add *-en*, in two cases changing the vowel sound as well: *ox* > *oxen*, *aurochs* > *aurochsen*, *child* > *children*, *brother* > *brethren*. The use of *-n* as a plural marker was a feature of an important class of Old

English nouns. Several other family words showed this ending in Middle English, such as *doughtren* ('daughters') and *sustren* ('sisters'), both found in Chaucer.

- A few nouns change their final fricative consonant (p. 243) as well as adding */z/*. Some change */-f/* to */-v/*, as in *wives*, *loaves*, and *halves*. The spelling reflects a change which took place in Old English, where */f/* was voiced between vowels (the plural of *hlaf* 'loaf' was *hlafas*). Some change */-θ/* to */-ð/*, as in *paths*, *booths*, and *mouths*. *House* is unique, with */-s/* changing to */-z/* in *houses*.

In several cases, usage is uncertain: *dwarf*, *hoof*, *scarf*, and *wharf* will be found with both */-fs/* and */-vz/*, and spelled accordingly (e.g. both *scarfs* and *scarves*); *truth*, *oath*, *sheath*, *wreath*, and (especially in American English) *youth* will be found with both */-θs/* and */-ðz/*, but both spelled in the same way, *-ths* (much to the frustration of the foreign learner). Exceptions to the exceptions include *still lifes* and the Toronto ice-hockey team, the *Maple Leafs*.

Inflections: nouns

Cases

Only 2 cases left in Modern English:

A common case (no ending)

A genitive case (adding –s to the sing. form)

Choice of *genitive* use is based on gender and style

Personal nouns and the higher animals (now also name of nations, companies, institutions) take the genitive form;

Inanimate nouns take the *of-genitive*

Inflections: verbs



The form of REGULAR LEXICAL verbs are regulated, i.e. they are predictable;

The forms of IRREGULAR VERBS are unpredictable.

Only 300 irregular verbs in English (surviving from strong verb classes in Old English).

Regular verbs appear in 4 forms:

base (also called infinitive); *-s*; *-ing*; *-ed*

Irregular verbs have 3 forms in common with reg.v. and may appear in 5 instead of 4 forms

THE IRREGULAR VERBS

There are two main features of irregular lexical verbs, both of which pose routine problems for young children and foreign learners (p. 428):

- Most irregular verbs change the vowel of the base to make their past or -ed participle forms. This process is known as vowel gradation (p. 21): *meet* > *met* (not **meeted*), *take* > *took* (not **taked*).
- The -ed ending is never used in a regular way, and is often not used at all, as in *cut*, *met*, *won*: *I have cut* (not **I have cutted*), *It was won* (not **It was winned*).

Using these features, it is possible to group irregular verbs into seven broad classes.

Class 1

About 20 verbs whose only irregular feature is the ending used for both their past and -ed participle forms: *have* > *had*, *send* > *sent*.

Class 2

About 10 verbs whose past tense is regular, but whose -ed participle form has an -n ending, as well as a variant form in -ed: *mow* > *mown* or *mowed*, *swell* > *swollen* or

Class 3

About 40 verbs which have the same ending for the past and -ed participle forms, but this is irregular; they also change the vowel of the base form: *keep* > *kept*, *sleep* > *slept*, *sell* > *sold*.

Class 4

About 75 verbs which have an -n ending for the -ed participle form, and an irregular past form; they also change the vowel of the base form: *blow* > *blew* > *blown*, *take* > *took* > *taken*, *see* > *saw* > *seen*.

Class 5

About 40 verbs which have the same form throughout, as in *cut*, *let*, *shut*: *I shut the door* (now), *I shut the door* (last week), *I have shut the door*.

Class 6

About 70 verbs which have no ending, but use the same form for both past tense and -ed participle; they also change the vowel of the base form: *spin* > *spun*, *sit* > *sat*, *stand* > *stood*.

Class 7

About 25 verbs, forming the most irregular type. There is no ending; the past and -ed participle forms differ; and the vowels change with each form: *swim* > *swam* > *swum*, *come* > *came* > *come*, *go* > *went* >