

College of Education  
University for Humanities Department of English  
Post-Graduate Studies



A Course in Morphology and Syntax

M.A. Methodology

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Words and Word- Formation Processes

Lect. Ashwaq Jassim Mohammed (Ph.D)

## **WORDS INTRODUCTION : -**

- Structural grammar is a systematic study of the language structure . It covers three levels of analysis:

1- phonology 2- morphology 3- syntax (the highest level of grammatical rules).

- Morphology is the study of the structure and form of words in a language, including how they are formed and their relationship to other words in the same language. In morphology, words can be broken down into smaller units called morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest grammatical unit in a language. There are two main types of morphemes:

1. Free Morphemes: These can stand alone as words (e.g., “book,” “run,” “happy”).
2. Bound Morphemes: These cannot stand alone and must be attached to other morphemes (e.g., prefixes like “un-” in “unhappy,” suffixes like “-ed” in “walked”).

## **DEFINITION OF WORDS**

The concept of a “word” is widely accepted, and people generally understand what it is. Teachers create spelling lists made up of words, and dictionaries organize entries primarily as words.

In writing, words are typically separated by spaces, but sometimes inconsistencies arise, such as in Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary, where similar terms like woodchuck and woodcock are written as single words, while wood duck and wood louse appear as two separate words, despite having the same stress pattern. While written words are usually clear, linguists are more concerned with spoken language. In speech, words can often be identified by pauses—people naturally pause between words but not within them. However, defining a word precisely is difficult and has led to much debate. Despite the challenges, there is generally a strong correlation between written and spoken words.

This is our cue, and it leads us to a useful definition

of word, that of Professor Charles F. Hockett: "A word is... any segment of a sentence bounded by successive points at which pausing is possible."

This pausing can be either silent or vocalized by "u-u-uh."

English words may be classified according to structure on the basis of the kinds and combinations of morphemes of which they are composed. We shall adopt a classification of three main classes: simple, complex, and compound words.

1. Simple words consist of a single free morpheme. Examples: slay, flea, long, spirit.

2. Complex words contain, as their immediate constituents (refer to the major divisions that can be made within word, they are the morphemes of which the word is composed of one or two or three), either two bound forms or a bound and a free form. Examples of two bound forms as IC's:

1. Compound words cannot be divided by the insertion of intervening material between the two parts, but grammatical structures can be so divided.

As illustration, let us compare two sentences: a. She is a sweetheart.  
(Compound Word)

b. She has a sweet heart. (Grammatical Structure)

In the first the compound word sweetheart is indivisible: you cannot insert anything between sweet and heart. But in the second sentence you could say She has a sweeter heart than her sister.

She has a sweet, kind heart. She has a sweet, sweet heart. thereby dividing the components sweet and heart. Thus sentence b contains a grammatical structure, not a compound word.

Following this principle of divisibility, we find that the next sentence is ambiguous: She loves sweet potatoes. ( compound word)

When sweet potatoes mean the yellow kind, the expression cannot be divided and is therefore a compound word. But when the words refer to white potatoes that are sweet, then division is possible, as in

She loves sweet, fresh potatoes . ( grammatical structure ) .

2. A member of a compound word cannot participate in a grammatical structure. (The compound is only one word whether it consists of two or three words, while the grammatical structure counts each word separately in the sense that the first word functions as a modifier for the second word (headword). Compare

a. A. It was a very hard ball. (Grammatical Structure) It was a ball.

B .It was a baseball. (Compound) Fixed forms.

in sentence (a) `hard ball` is a grammatical structure because `hard` is an adjective modifying the noun `ball`, and that's why the adjective `hard` admits the intensifier `very`, but the word "baseball" is one compound word that cannot accept any intensifier.

Thus, it is not correct to say: b. \*It was a very baseball. (Wrong)

Types of Word Formation :

- Compounding -Derivation – Invention -Echoism - Clipping - Acronymy

- Blending - Back- formation -Folk Etymology - Antonomasia - Reduplication .

-Defining and giving example for each type :

#### A. Compounding

Compounding is simply the joining of two or more words into a single words.

There are three types of compounding words :

1- Compounds may be written as one word .

Ex: blackboard , breakfast 2- As a hyphenated word . Ex : mother-in-law long-haired 3- As two words .

Ex: post office , high school

Note/ Occasionally it is hard to say whether or not a word is a compound; compare, for instance, despite with in spite of and instead of with in place of.

## B. Derivation

Derivation is the forming of new words by combining derivational affixes or bound bases with existing words, as , emplane, deplane, teleplay, ecosystem, re-ask. Words like these, some of which you have never heard before, are often formed in the heat of speaking or writing. You will note that they are immediately understandable because you know the meaning of the parts.

## C. Invention ( coinage )

Now and then new words are totally invented, like Kodak, nylon, dingbat, floosy, goof, quark, and blurb, but few of these find their way into the common vocabulary .

Note / This type is often used by companies when they create names for new products .

## D. Echoism

Echoism is the formation of words whose sound suggests their meaning, like hiss and peewee. The meaning is usually a sound, either natural like the roar of a waterfall or artificial like the clang of a bell. But the meaning may also be the creature that produces the sound, like bobwhite. Examples: moan, click, murmur, quack, thunder, whisper. The vulgar “four-letter” words of English are largely echoic; and at the other end of the cultural scale are the echoic words called onomatopoeic in literary studies, which are frequent in poetry.

## E. Clipping

Clipping means cutting off the beginning or the end of a word, or both, leaving a part to stand for the whole. The resultant form is called a clipped word. The jargon of the campus is filled with clipped words: lab, dorm, prof, exam, gym, prom, math, psych, mike, and countless others. As these examples suggest, the clipping of the end of a word is the most common, and it is mostly nouns that undergo this process. Clipping results in new free forms in the language and sometimes in the creation of new morphemes, like prof ( from Professor ) .

## F. Acronymy

Acronymy is the process whereby a word is formed from the initials or beginning segments of a succession of words.

1- In some cases the initials are pronounced, as in:

Ex : MP (military police, or Member of Parliament).

PC ( personal computer ).

2- In others the initials and/or beginning segments are pronounced as the spelled word would be, as in :

Ex: NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) is pronounced as /neto/.

## G. Blending

Blending is the fusion of two words into one, usually the first part of one word with the last part of another, as in gasohol, from gasoline and alcohol. The resultant blend partakes of both original meanings. Many blends are nonce words, here today and gone tomorrow, and relatively few become - part of the standard lexicon. The two classes, blends and clipped words, are not sharply separated, and some words may be put into either class.