

University of Tikrit

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Department of English



Process of Word Formation 2

Grammar

Second year

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1. Acronyms:

An acronym involves using the initial letters of a sequence of words or morphemes to form a new word. These examples in fact show two types of acronyms. Some, like KL, are pronounced by the names of the letters that compose them, whereas others, like UNESCO, can be pronounced as a word. The former is sometimes called initialisms, whereas the latter is an acronym. The word CD-ROM is a mixture of both, its first part an initialism and its second part an acronym. Words like PhD (Philosophy Doctor) or radar (radio detecting and ranging) are also taken as acronyms, although they both take two initial letters from one of their words, rather than just one (“Ph” from Philosophy and “ra” from radio). In the last forty years there has been a great increase in the use of acronyms. They tend to abound in large organizations—for instance, in the army, in government, and in big business, where they offer neat ways of expressing long and cumbersome terms. The very names of some businesses have been acronymized, like Nabisco, Texaco, and Alcoa. Many acronyms are used and understood only by initiates in a given field, like the military CQ, TDT, and BOQ, whereas others gain general currency, like GI, CO, and PX. It is likely that you employ some campus acronyms that would not be understood elsewhere.

2. 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, lisp, chickadee,

bobolink. 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.

3. Antonomasia

Antonomasia means the formation of a common noun, a verb, or an adjective from the name of a person or place. For example, the word frisbee comes from the Frisbie Bakery in Bridgewater, Connecticut, whose pie tins were used for a throwing game. The term vandal derives from the Vandals, a Germanic people who overran southern Europe 1500 years ago and sacked and looted Rome in the fifth century.

Names from history and literature have given us many common nouns. A lover, for instance, may be called a romeo, a don juan, a Casanova.

4. Reduplication

Reduplication is the process of forming a new word by doubling a morpheme, usually with a change of vowel or initial consonant, as in pooh-pooh, tiptop, and hanky-panky. The basic, originating morpheme is most frequently the second half, like dilly-dally, but it may be the first half, like ticktock, or both halves, like singsong, or neither half, like boogie-woogie.

Since the word reduplication has three meanings relevant to our discussion—the process, the result of the process (that is, the new word), and the element repeated—let us avoid confusion by calling these words “twin-words.”

Twin-words can be divided into three classes, leaving only a small residue of irregular forms.

1. The base morpheme is repeated without change.

Examples: clop-clop, tick-tick

This is the smallest class. The twin-words in this group are often onomatopoeic—that is, they represent sounds, like gobble-gobble and chug-chug.

2. The base morpheme is repeated with a change of initial consonant.

Examples: fuddy-duddy, tootsie-wootsie, razzle-dazzle, roly-poly, teeny-weeny, heebie-jeebies, hootchy-kootchy.

3. The base morpheme is repeated with a change of vowel.

Examples: chitchat, tiptop, criss-cross.

The first vowel is usually the high front lax vowel /ɪ/, and the second is a low vowel /æ/, /a/, or /ɔ/.

Examples: zigzag, ticktock, pingpong.

5. Borrowing:

Borrowing (or loanword) in linguistics refers to the process where one language adopts words, phrases, or grammatical structures from another language. English has been a prodigious borrower of words from other languages throughout its history, and a vast number of borrowed words are now in our language. This has come about through invasions, immigration, exploration, trade, and other avenues of contact between English and some foreign language. Below are a few examples of these borrowings. In many cases a word may pass, by borrowing, through one or more languages before it enters English. A case in point is the Arabic plural noun hashshashin, hashish eaters, which entered French in the form assassin, and from French was borrowed into English.

6. Back –formation

Back-formation is a type of word formation where a new word is created by removing an actual or perceived affix (like a suffix or prefix) from an existing word. Unlike borrowing or derivation, it involves shortening a longer word, often based on a misunderstanding of its structure.

Examples of Back-Formation

Original Word	Back-Formation	Notes
editor (noun)	edit (verb)	The verb edit didn't exist before editor.
donation (noun)	donate (verb)	Latin donare existed, but English donate came later.
laziness (noun)	lazy (adj.)	Lazy was formed from laziness, not the other way around.
babysitter (noun)	babysit (verb)	The verb emerged in the 20th century.

References

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- Stageberg, N. C. (1971). An introduction to English grammar (3rd ed.). Holt, Rinehart and Winston.