

## Derivational and inflectional morphology

**DERIVATION:** A process of affixation. Affixation is a morphological process that adds suffixes to words.

Derivational affixes are affixes that:

- build a word having a different but (but usually related) semantic content than that of its base,
- usually change the lexical category of a word,
- are restricted in the class of bases to which they can attach.

*Classes of derivational affixes:*

### Two Classes of Derivational Affixes

It is common to distinguish between two types of derivational affixes in English. **Class 1 affixes** often trigger changes in the consonant or vowel segments of the base and may affect stress placement. In addition, they often combine with bound roots, as in the last of the following examples in Table 4.9.

**Table 4.9** Typical effects of Class 1 affixes

| Affix  | Sample word           | Change triggered by affix  |
|--------|-----------------------|--|
| -ity   | san-ity<br>public-ity | vowel in the base changes from /e/ to /æ/ (cf. <i>sane</i> )<br>final consonant of the base changes from /k/ to /s/;<br>stress shifts to second syllable (cf. <i>públic</i> vs. <i>publícity</i> ) |
| -y     | democrac-y            | final consonant of the base changes from /t/ to /s/;<br>stress shifts to second syllable (cf. <i>démocrat</i> vs. <i>demócracy</i> )   |
| -ive   | product-ive           | stress shifts to second syllable (cf. <i>próduct</i> vs. <i>prodúctive</i> )   |
| -(i)al | part-ial              | final consonant of the base changes from /t/ to /ʃ/ (cf. <i>part</i> )   |
| -ize   | public-ize            | final consonant of the base changes from /k/ to /s/ (cf. <i>public</i> )   |
| -ion   | nat-ion               | final consonant of the base changes from /t/ to /ʃ/ (cf. <i>native</i> )   |

In contrast, **Class 2 affixes** tend to be phonologically neutral, having no effect on the segmental makeup of the base or on stress placement (see Table 4.10).

**Table 4.10** Some typical Class 2 affixes

| Affix | Sample word | Change triggered by affix |
|-------|-------------|---------------------------|
| -ness | prompt-ness | None                      |
| -less | hair-less   | None                      |
| -ful  | hope-ful    | None                      |
| -ly   | quiet-ly    | None                      |
| -er   | defend-er   | None                      |
| -ish  | self-ish    | None                      |

*Practice:* For each word below, write the affix and the class to which it belongs.

| WORD           | AFFIX | CLASS |
|----------------|-------|-------|
| 1. racial      |       |       |
| 2. silliness   |       |       |
| 3. bureaucracy |       |       |
| 4. narrate     |       |       |
| 5. childish    |       |       |

**INFLECTION:** is commonly a process of affixation. Inflectional affixes are affixes that:

- function to provide grammatical information (e.g., singular or plural, tense)
- do not change the lexical category of a word
- occur at the outer edges of a word (e.g., last)

English has 8 inflectional affixes. They are found in nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

| NOUNS  | VERBS   | ADJECTIVES  |
|--|---|---|
| 1. <b>Plural: -es/-s</b><br>dogs, cats, roses        | 1. <b>Third person singular: -s</b><br>She likes jazz. He walks slowly.             | 1. <b>Comparative: -er</b><br>greener, louder, faster     |
| 2. <b>Possessive: -'s</b><br>Mary's book, Pat's book | 2. <b>Past tense: -ed</b><br>She filled the gas tank.<br>He wanted a dog.           | 2. <b>Superlative: -est</b><br>greenest, loudest, fastest |
|  | 3. <b>Progressive/present participle: -ing</b><br>I am sighing. You are singing.    |   |
|  | 4. <b>Past participle: -en/-ed</b><br>I have spoken.<br>He has filled the gas tank. |   |

*Practice:* For each of the following words, identify the lexical category (verb, noun, etc.) of the root and the type of inflectional information found (past tense, superlative, plural, etc.).

| WORD        | LEXICAL CATEGORY | INFLECTIONAL INFORMATION |
|-------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. runs     |                  |                          |
| 2. lamps    |                  |                          |
| 3. playing  |                  |                          |
| 4. lovelier |                  |                          |
| 5. driven   |                  |                          |
| 6. Mario's  |                  |                          |
| 7. sorriest |                  |                          |

*Inflectional vs derivational practice:* For each word, identify all the affixes, and for each affix state whether it is inflectional or derivational

| WORD             | AFFIX (ES) | INFLECTIONAL/DERIVATIONAL |
|------------------|------------|---------------------------|
| 1. instructional |            |                           |
| 2. reuse         |            |                           |
| 3. girl's        |            |                           |
| 4. smaller       |            |                           |
| 5. delightful    |            |                           |
| 6. nationalize   |            |                           |
| 7. mistreat      |            |                           |
| 9. unhealthiest  |            |                           |
| 10. trucks       |            |                           |