The Suffixes to Create Nouns

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Abstract

This paper provides knowledge about suffixes used for noun formation and a detailed analysis of those suffixes including descriptions of derivational suffixes, types of derivation, and suffixes to derive nouns. A better understanding of semantic/conceptual aspects and implications for teaching EFL/ESL learners are also addressed. Understanding of this topic provides EFL/ESL teachers with conceptualized knowledge leading to effective teaching about noun-formation using a suffix.

Keywords: grammar, integrative, approach, exercise, gerund, infinitive, EFL/ESL

The Suffixes to Create Nouns

Derivational Suffixes

Word formation is about how new words are made. Words can be formed in various ways and derivation is one of the ways. Lieber (2005) claims that "derivation is active means of word formation in English" (p.383). According to Delahunty & Garvey (2010), derivation is defined as "the process of creating separate but morphologically related words"(p.129) and typically, derivation changes "a word from one part of speech to another or from one subclass to another" (p.142). Suffix refers to "a bound morpheme attached after a root" (p.142). In summary, derivational suffixes are added after a root to create morphologically related words. The derived word using derivation is often referred to as a derivative (Plag, 2003, p.11). Though there are many kinds of derivational suffixes to form words, this paper focuses on derivational suffixes that create nouns.

Type of Derivation and the Suffixes to Derive Nouns

It is noted that the derivational suffix forming nouns is not attached to any single part of speech. Hamawand (2008) claims that "Suffixes attach to roots which are identifiable with members of the major classes: verbs, adjectives and nouns"(p.2). According to Bauer (1983), there are three types of derivation forming nouns; nouns from nouns, nouns from verbs, and nouns from adjectives (pp.220-222). Similarly, Plag (2003) claims that nominal suffixes are used "to derive abstract nouns from verbs, adjectives and nouns" (p.86). Furthermore, Hamawand (2008) adds "agent-forming nominalisers" to the three categories above (p.15). This paper classifies these suffixes into four categories based on Hamawand. Though Hamawand's agent-forming suffixes are overlapping with the other categories in some degree, it is regarded as valuable to separate agent-forming suffixes to help English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

teachers understand semantic features about these suffixes.

Nouns from Nouns and Suffixes to Derive Nouns

This type refers to producing nouns from nouns. We can see these examples as in *kingdom, friendship*. According to Bauer (1983), this type of derivational suffix includes "*-dom (gansterdom)*, *-ess (serress)*, and *-iana (Etoniana)*, *-er (Bircher)*, *-ette (kitchenette)*, *-hood (manhood)*,*-ism (-absenteeism)*, *-let (streamlet)*, *-ling (duckling)*, *-scape (seascape),* and *-ship (kinship)*" (pp. 220-221*)*. In addition, *-ery* (*jewelry*) can be added to this category (Hamawand, 2008, p.92).

Nouns from Verbs and Suffixes to Derive Nouns

This type refers to producing nouns from verbs and this might be the most common type of derivation (Bauer, 1983, p.221). We can see these examples as in *development, congratulation, survival*. This type of derivational suffix includes "*-ation (categorization), -ee (blackmailee),-ure (licensure), -al (arrival), -ary (dispensary),-er(killer),-ment (management)*" (p.221-222). Hamawand (2008) claims the suffix *-ion* (*-ation, -sion, -xion*) is by far the most frequent to create nouns among these suffixes (p.36).

Nouns from Adjectives and Suffixes to Derive Nouns

This type refers to producing nouns from adjectives and we can see these examples as in *happiness, vacancy*. This type of derivational suffix includes "*-cy (militancy),-ce (elegancy), -ness (sincereness),-ity (sincerity),-dom (freedom), -er (sixer), -hood (falsehood), -ist (socialist), and -th (warmth)*" (Bauer, 1983, p.222).

Agent forming nouns and suffixes to derive agents

The term "agent forming nouns" is very controversial and it is discussed in the semantic domain in more detail. This type of derivation refers to producing an agent noun from verbs and

nouns, and we can see these examples as in *musician, interviewer, Marxist*. This type of

derivational suffix includes "*-ant /-ent (acceptant, president), -ee (divorcee), -er/-or/-ar (baker,*

instructor, beggar), -(i)an (mucisian),-ian (Persian),-ist (botanist), and *-ster (gangster)*"

(Hamawand, 2008, pp. 110-116).

The Semantic Domain of Suffixes Forming Nouns

With a detailed analysis of derivational suffixes forming nouns presented based on the

form class, the suffixes are addressed in terms of semantic aspects in this section. The

prototypical semantic aspects of nominal suffixes are analyzed based on four categories as

Hamawand (2008) classified the suffixes into. This paper covers the frequently used suffixes

only, which EFL learners might often encounter in actual English speaking environments and

the suffixes are chosen mainly based on previous research results. To be specific, Biber et al. (as

cited in Terblanche, 2009, p.44) list six most frequently used suffixes: *-tion, -ity, -er, -ness, -ism*

and *–ment*. Huddleston et al.(as cited in Terblanche, 2009, p.44) list *-ion, -er, -ity, -ment, -*

(e/a)nce, and *-ty*.

Suffixes Forming Nouns from Nouns (De-nominal Nominalisers)

> ***- dom*:** Bauer & Huddleston (2002) state *-dom* attaches to a noun roof as in *dukedom*,
>
> but *freedo*m and *wisdom* are exceptions in that it adds to adjective root (p.1701). Bauer
>
> (1983) claims *-dom* creates "abstract, uncountable nouns from concrete, countable nouns"
>
> (p.220). According to Bauer & Huddleston (2002) *-dom* denotes generally "state
>
> /condition of being" (p.1701). Hamawand (2008) specifies the meaning of *-dom* as
>
> follows:
>
> "the territory ruled by the person specified by the nominal root" as in "*dukedom,*
>
> *kingdom…*", for example, "*dukedom* is a region or territory owned by a duke" (p.86).

"the land inhabited by the people specified by the nominal root" as in *Yankeedom…*", for

example, "*Yankeedom* is a land or region inhabited by Yankees" (p. 86).

"a group of people united by the nominal root" as in "*fandom, filmdom…*", for instance,

"*fandom* means a group of people who support a particular sport" (p.86).

-hood: Bauer & Huddleston (2002) argue that *-hood* denotes the "conditions of being" as

in *sainthood* or a "collectivity of X" as in *brotherhood* (p.1701). Furthermore, Plag (as

cited in Lieber, 2005) argues that "*-hood* should not attach to already abstract nouns":

puppyhood is accepted but *gloryhood* is not accepted (p.410). Hamawand (2008)

specifies the suffix as follows:

"the condition of being referred to by the nominal root" as in "*maidenhood, boyhood…*",

for example, "*maidenhood* is the condition of being an unmarried woman" (p.87).

"a union of people sharing the thing referred to by the nominal root" as in "*brotherhood,

priesthood, sisterhood…*", for example, "*sisterhood* is union that includes women who

have shared goals, experiences or viewpoints" (p.87).

"the period of time referred to by the nominal root" as in "*babyhood, childhood…*", for

instance, "*childhood* is the period of time when one is a child" (p.87).

-ism: According to Bauer & Huddleston (2002), *-ism* denotes "doctrines, systems of

philosophical, religious or political beliefs, intellectual of artistic movement" (p.1702).

Aronoff & Fudeman (2011) claim *-ism* denotes "doctrinal system of principles" as in

"*Platonism…*" and "a peculiarity of speech" as in "*colloquialism, Obamanism…*"

(p.140). In addition, Terblanche (2009) states *-ism* denotes "intellectual and artistic

movements as in *essentialism*", "prejudice as in *racism*", "attitudes as in *favoritism*",

"forms of behavior as in *mannerism*", "medical conditions as in *autism*", and

"state/condition of being as in *bilingualism*"(p.46). Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"the belief embodied in the theory named by the nominal root" as in "*feminism, liberalism…*", for example, "*feminism* is the belief that women should have the same rights as men" (p.88).

"the philosophy descended from the person named by the nominal root" as in "*Clavinism, Machiavellism…*", for example, "*Calvinism* descends from John Calvin's philosophy, which holds that God controls what happens on Earth" (p.88).

- (e)ry: Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"a set of things expressed by the nominal root" as in "*pottery, machinery…*", for instance, "*pottery* is a set of objects that are made out of clay by hand" (p.92).

"the place connected with the thing expressed by the nominal words" in "*winery, nursery…*", for example, "*winery* is a place where wine is made" (pp. 92-93).

Suffixes Forming Nouns form Verbs (De-verbal Nominalisers)

Lieber (2005) points out the suffixes *-al, -ation,* and *-ment* all form abstract nouns from verbs (p.406). Bauer (as cited in Lieber, 2005) claims the suffix *-al* is "no longer productive in present day English" and *-ment* is still productive and *-ation* is the most productive (p.408).

***-al*:** Bauer & Huddleston (2002) claim "*-al* forms action, states and processes", which might be interpreted the suffix forms abstract nominalisations (p.1700). However, Terblanche (2009) argues *-a*l creates concrete nouns as in *festival, hospital…*, and it is necessary to evaluate "the semantic nature of the suffix and give new insights into the semantic domain" formed by *-al* (p.45). Hamawand (2008) claims *-al* denotes "the act of doing the process named by the verbal root" as in "*approval, removal, arrival…*", for

example, "*remova*l is the act of taking away something" (p.34).

***-ion (-ation, -sion, -xion)*:** Hamawand (2008) claims *-ion* denotes "the act of doing the

process referred to in the verbal" root as in "*construction, restoration…*", sometimes, *-*

ion means "the result of the process referred to by the verbal root" as in "*nomination,*

emigration..." (p.37), for example, "*construction* is the act of making something" and

"*expulsion* is the result when one is forced to leave somewhere" (p.36-37).

***-ment* :** Bauer & Huddleston (2002) state *-ment* is "now marginally productive" though

it was used widely in the past (p.1703). Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"the result of the process referred to by the verbal root" as in "*excitement, retirement,*

accomplishment, punishment, assessment…", for example, "*retirement* is the result when

one leaves a job and stops working because of old age or ill health" (p.38).

"the act of doing the process referred to in the verbal root" as in "*enrichment,*

inducement, management, disappointment, adjournment…", for example, "*management*

is the act of controlling an organization" (p.38).

"the state referred to in the verbal root" as in "*amazement, contentment, enjoyment…*",

for example, "*amazemen*t is the state of being amazed" (p.38).

Suffixes Forming Nouns from Adjectives (De-adjectival Nominalisers)

Lieber (2005) points out *-ness* and *-ity* are "most frequently treated as a rival pair"

(p.409). She (2005) claims *-ness* is highly productive and- *ity* is less productive since *-ity*

attaches to Latinate bases but *-ness* "attaches freely either to native or to Latinate bases" (p.409).

***-ness*:** Plag (2003) argues that "*-ness* is perhaps the most productive suffix of English",

like Lieber (p.92). Similarly, Bauer (1983) claims "*-ness* is one of the most productive

suffixes in the English language today" (p.222). Hamawand (2008) specifies it as

follows:

"the trait denoted by the adjectival root" as in "*awareness, boldness, gentleness…*", for example, "*gentleness* is the trait of being gentle" (p.63).

"the property denoted by the adjectival root" as in "*brightness, emptiness, quietness, toughness…*", for example, "*brightness* is the property of being bright" (p.63).

-ity: According to Plag (2003) "many *-ity* derivatives are lexicalized, i.e. they have become permanently incorporated onto the mental lexicons of speakers, thereby often adopting idiosyncratic meanings, such as *antiquity* 'state of being antique' " (p.91).

Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"the quality or property designated by the adjectival root" as in "*agility, creativity, diversity…*", for example, "*diversity* is the property of being diverse" (p.62).

"the mode of dealing with the situation designated by the adjectival root" as in "*sensibility, hostility…*", for example, "*sensitivity* is the mode of being sensitive" (p.62).

Suffixes Forming Agents (Agent Forming Nominalisers)

Hamawand (2008, p.108) distinguishes agent forming nominalisers from other nominalisers. However, Bauer (1983) argues that it is "a misnomer" in that such suffixes denote "an instrument (*opener*)", and "an experiencer or a patient (*lover*)" as well as agents (p.286). He claims that it should be called "subject nominalization" instead of agent nominalization (p.286). Lieber (2005) uses the term "personal nouns" and they include *-er, -ant/-ent, -ist*, and *-ee* (p.403).

-ee: Bauer (1983) argues *-ee* creates "human patient nouns from verbs" and it becomes "more productive in current English as in *blackmailee, curee, vaccine…*" (p.222). Plag (2003) claims that the suffix *-ee* derives nouns "denoting non-volitional participants"

(p.88). Similarly, Hamawand (2008, p.112) argues, "prototypically, this suffix is used to form patientive nouns" and he specifies it as follows:

"a person who is affected by the action named by the verbal root" as in an "*employee, interviewee, adoptee…*", and for example, "*employe*e is a person who is employed and adoptee is a person who is adopted" (p. 112).

"a person to whom something is transferred by the action named by the verbal root" as in "*awardee, assignee…*", and for example, "*awardee* is a person to whom award is given"(p.112).

-er: Lieber (2005) specifies the suffix *-er* into "agent (*writer*), instrument (*printer*), experiencer (*hearer*), stimulus (*pleaser*), patient/theme (*loaner*), denonimal noun (*village*r), measure (*fiver*), and location (*diner*)"(p.403). Marchand (as cited in Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011) breaks down agent nouns *-er* into four categories: "persons (*baker*), animals (*pointer*), material objects (*eraser*) and immaterial objects (*reminder*)" (p.145). Hamawand (2008) claims that the suffix *-er* is the most frequent and *-or* and -ar are its variants. He specifies *-er* as follows:

"a person who performs the generic action labeled in the verbal root" as in "*teacher, advisor, beggar…*", and for example, "a teacher is a person who teaches" (p. 114).

"a thing that is set to perform the action labeled in the verbal root" as in "*freezer, lighter, toaster, calculator…*", and for example, "*a calculator* is a device which is used for calculations" (114).

In addition, according to Plag (2003) *-er* forms "person nouns indicating place of origin or residence" as in *Londoner, New Yorker…*, and the variant *-or* tends to attach to "Latinese bases ending in /s/ or /t/ as in *conductor, oscillator, compressor…*". (p.89).

-(i)an: Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"a person whose job involves the thing referred to in the nominal root" as in *magician, musician, clinician, rhetorician, technician…*, and for example, "*a magician* is a person whose job is to perform tricks for entertainment" (p.117).

"a person who is devoted to the knowledge field referred to in the nominal root" as in "*phonetician, physician, politician, theoretician…*, and for example, *a mathematician* is a person who is devoted to mathematics" (p.117).

Plag (2003) mentions *-(i)an* refers to "a person who follows or supports someone as in *Chomskyan, Smithsonian…*". For example, "*Chomskyan* is a person who follows Chomsky's theory in the field of linguistics" (p.90).

-ist : Bauer & Huddleston (2002, p.1699) argue *-ist* is extremely productive. Hamawand (2008) specifies the suffix as follows:

"a person who is versed in the knowledge field indicated by the nominal root" as in "*biologist, economist, psychologist…*", and for example, "*a psychologist* is a person who is versed in psychology" (p.118).

"a person who holds the thing indicated by the nominal root" as in "*extremist, idealist, nationalist, Marxist, pragmatist, reformist, socialist…*"and usually, *-ist* added to the base "referring to beliefs, doctrines or philosophies", for example, "*socialist* is a person who advocates socialism" (p. 118).

"a person who handles the thing indicated by the nominal root" as in *novelist, artist, columnist, dentist, florist…*", and usually *-ist* is added to the base "referring to skills", for example, "*a novelist* is someone who writes novels" (p.118).

"a person who plays the instruments indicated by the nominal root" as in "*cellist, pianist,*

guitarist…" and usually *-ist* is added to the base "referring to musical instruments", for example, a *guitarist* is a person who plays the guitar (p.119).

The Conceptual Domain of Suffixes Forming Nouns (*-ness* vs. *-ity*)

It is found that there are noun pairs that share the same roots but use different suffixes as in *sensitiveness / sensitivity, collectivity / collectiveness, productivity / productiveness,* and the pairs might sound confusing to EFL learners. Therefore, it is valuable to compare and contrast the suffixes *-ness* vs. *-ity.*

Aronoff & Fudeman (2011) claim the *-ness* derivate has more transparent semantics than the *-ity* derivate (p.231). For example, they (2011) distinguish *collectivity* vs. *collectiveness*, arguing, "Both may mean 'the quality or condition of being collective' " but "only *collectivity* has the additional meaning 'the people considered as a body or whole' " (p.231). Furthermore, they (2011) point out "technical terms are more likely to be formed with *-ity* than *-ness*" (p. 238), that is why they use *productivity* instead of *productiveness* in the title of the chapter of their book: *Salience and Productivity* (p.238). They (2011) claim that we say Einstein's theory of *relativity* instead of *relativeness* for the same reason (p.238). Likewise, Bauer & Huddleston (2002) argue *-ity* is likely to be involved with technical terms (p.1703). Additionally, Hamawand (2008) claims that *sensitiveness* means "the trait of being sensitive" and follows verbs like "*analyze, define, identify*, ….", while *sensitivity* means "the mode of being sensitive" and follows verbs like "*express, reflect, show*, …"(p.73).

Implications for Teaching EFL/ESL Learners

According to Nagy et al. (1993), derivational suffixes are involved with "the more complex syntax of written language and formal discourse" such as lectures and academic papers rather than everyday conversation (p.157). They (1993) claim that derivational suffixes

have "the most abstract and difficult aspect of morphology" to learners (p.156). In addition, Van & Terblanche (as cited in Terblanche, 2009) claim ESL students are likely to "use nomialisations less often than native speakers when writing" (p.39). Therefore, we need to let students get access to derivational suffixes with aspects of meanings as well as forms for them to use the suffixes more efficiently.

The noun forming suffixes treated here do not cover every suffix in English. However, it is assumed that this paper will be valuable for EFL teachers in that it provides the knowledge of noun-formation suffixes through looking at semantic aspects of nominal suffixes as well as forms. Referring to implied meanings of each suffix, the teacher and the learners might apply this knowledge into their real life by creating nouns meaningfully. For example, *Delahuntyism*; descends from *Gerald Delahunty*, which holds that professional teachers should be able to express what they know exactly with correct examples to support their knowledge, which is regarded as the necessary condition for current and future EFL teachers.

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