STYLISTIC USAGE OF WORD FORMATION PATTERNS CONTENTS

Murodova Mohigul
Farg‘ona Davlat Universiteti
Ingliz tili va adabiyoti fakulteti talabasi

Hilola Xoldorova
Ingliz tili va adabiyoti
fakulteti Ingliz tili o‘qitish metodikasi o‘qituvchisi

ABSTRACT

This article provides information about the stylistic usage of word formation. Moreover, it has been stated out with a discussion of the various problems involved with the notion of morpheme. In addition, the derivational processes and its functions are deeply mentioned.

Keywords: Immigration, Assumptions, Fluently, Bilingual, Adjustment, Values, Customs, Efficient, Requires, Questionnaire.

It has been estimated that average speakers of a language know from 45,000 to 60,000 words. This means that we as speakers must have stored these words somewhere in our heads, our so-called mental lexicon. But what exactly is it that we have stored? What do we mean when we speak of ‘words’? In non-technical every-day talk, we speak about ‘words’ without ever thinking that this could be a problematic notion. In this section we will see that, perhaps contra our first intuitive feeling, the ‘word’ as a linguistic unit deserves some attention, because it is not as straightforward as one might expect. If you had to define what a word is, you might first think of the word as a unit in the writing system, the so-called orthographic word. You could say, for example, that a word is an uninterrupted string of letters which is preceded by a blank space and followed either by a blank space or a punctuation mark. The definition of ‘word-formation’ in the previous paragraph raises an important problem.

a. She kicks the ball.

b. The baby is not drinking her milk .

c. The students are nor interested in physics

The italicized words in are certainly complex words, all of them are made up of two morphemes. Kicks consists of the verb kick and the third person singular suffix -

s, drinking consists of the verb drink and the participial suffix -ing, and students consists of the noun student and the plural suffix -s.

The plural and person suffixes are therefore syntactically relevant, hence inflectional. One might argue that the suffix -er in worker is also syntactically relevant, in the sense that it is important for the syntax whether a word is a noun or a verb. That is of course true, but only in a very limited way. Thus, it is not relevant for the syntax whether the noun ends in -er, -ee, -ion, or whether the noun is morphologically complex at all. In that sense, derivational suffixes are not relevant for the syntax. Let us turn to the next set of properties that unites the words on the left and differentiates them from the words on the right. These properties concern the position of the morphemes: in English derivational morphemes can occur at either end of the base words whereas regular inflection is always expressed by suffixes. Only irregular inflection makes use of non-affixational means, as for example in mouse - mice or sing - sang. There is no inflectional prefix in English. Furthermore, forms like workers or colonializing indicate that inflectional morphemes always occur outside derivational morphemes, they close the word for further (derivational) affixation*workers-hood, *colonializing-ers evidenced by derivatives like un-truthful-ness or the famous textbook example dis-establish-ment-arian-ism, derivational suffixes can and do occur inside other derivational suffixes. Another interesting difference between the words in (14a) and (14b) concerns the part of speech. The suffixes in (14a) change the part of speech of the base word. For instance, the suffixation of -less makes an adjective out of a noun, the suffix -ity makes a noun out of an adjective, and the suffix -ize turns an adjective into a verb. The inflectional suffixes don’t change the category of the base word. A plural marker on a noun does not change the category, nor does the past tense marker on the verb.

However, not all derivational affixes are category-changing, as is evidenced, for example, by most prefixes (as e.g. in post-war, decolonialize, non-issue), or by the nominal suffix -ism, which can attach to nouns to form nouns. The final property of derivation to be discussed here is exemplified by the two derivatives interview and curiosity in as against all inflectional forms. Both forms in (14a) show a property that is often found in derivation, but hardly ever in inflection, and that is called semantic opacity. If you consider the meaning of interview and the meaning of the ingredient morphemes inter- and view, you can observe that the meaning of interview is not the sum of the meaning of its parts. The meaning of inter- can be paraphrased as ‘between’, that of (the verb) view as ‘look at something‘ (definitions according to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English), whereas the meaning of (the verb) interview is ‘to ask someone questions, especially in a formal meeting‘. Thus the meaning of the derived word cannot be inferred on the basis of its constituent morphemes, it is to some

extent opaque, or nontransparent. The same holds for curiosity, a noun that has two related meanings: it can refer to a personal attribute ‘the desire to know or learn about anything‘, which is transparent, but it can also mean ‘object of interest’ (cf., for example, the definitions given in the OED), which is certainly less transparent. Non-transparent formations are quite common in derivational morphology, but rare in inflection. Closely related to this generalization is the fact that inflectional categories tend to be fully productive, whereas derivational categories often show strong restrictions as to the kinds of possible combinations.

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