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Panacea of Vocabulary: The Formation of Words is a Growth from within and an Integral Part of English Etymology

Syed Raihan Ahmed Nezami, M.A. (English), B.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate

Numerous words used in English today come from other languages. There are lots of Latin and Greek and French influences on most European languages like English, and Spanish. You would be surprised at how this basic awareness of the origin of the English language can be of great help to us. English language has been enriched by borrowing from foreign tongues, but it is not merely by borrowing; new words can easily be created and are being created almost every day. English has a long history of growth since long; basically it can be divided in three periods - old English, Middle English and modern English.

The period of old English falls between 450 and 1150 a. C. It was quite flexible like many European languages such as Greek, Latin and Indo-European languages. This period is marked as a period of formation and growth of English as a new language.

The most meaningful changes came in Middle English between 1150 and 1500 a. C. The grammar was also changed. It was no more flexible but it had become completely analytical.

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This remarkable change was due to the invasion by the Normandy, which continued for about 400 years. Thousands of words were added to its vocabulary from French and Latin and its growth was in full swing.

The period of modern English started from 1500 till the date. At this time the printing press was invented which eased the conservative process of grammar and orthography. The need for a standard language for its readers was badly felt at that time. The discoveries and travels by the British all over the world highly accelerated the transmission process of new vocabulary and its growth. They came into contact of about 50 languages, among which especially French and Spanish highly enriched English. In this period, there occurred notable changes in its pronunciation and phonology.

There are a variety of ways in which a new word can be formed out of the native speech material, showing thereby, that English has grown from within and is still growing of itself. The different ways by which new words have been formed are:

Key Words: history, different periods, influence of various languages, word formation, growth of vocabulary, borrowing, influence of various languages, internal growth,

Key Points

1. By derivation, that is (a) Primary derivatives and (b) Secondary Derivatives - Morphemes i.e. suffixes and prefixes
2. By word composition giving rise to compounds
3. By compounds with prefixes
4. Nouns as verbs and Verbs as nouns (by adding nothing at all to the existing words)
5. Formation of new words by back-formation and shortening
6. Formation of new Portmanteau words through telescoping
7. Formation of new words from Names of places and Persons
8. Formation of new words through Imitation or Onomatopoeia
9. Formation of new words from obscure origin

I. Derivation

One of the simplest methods of word-formation is called derivation. It can be done in two ways:

A. PRIMARY DERIVATIVES: New words can be formed by making some changes in the body of the simple Words.

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i) Formation of Nouns from verbs and adjectives

Verbs	Nouns	Verbs	Nouns
Advise	Advice	Gape	Gap
Bear	Bier	Gird	Girth
Bind	Bond	Grieve	Grief
Bless	Bliss	Live	Life
Break	Breach	Lose	Loss
Burn	Brand	Prove	Proof
Choose	choice	Sing	Song
Chop	Chip	Sit	Seat
Deal	Dole	Speak	Speech
Deem	Doom	Strike	Stroke
	Ditch	Strive	Strife
Dig	Dike	Wake	Watch
Float	Fleet	Weave	Web, Woof
<i>Adjectives</i>	<i>Nouns</i>		
Dull	Dolt		
Hot	Heat		
Proud	Pride		

Page No 287, Reference (1)

ii) Formation of Adjectives from Verbs and Nouns

Verbs	Adjectives	Nouns	Adjectives
Float	Fleet	Milk	Milch
Lie	Low	Wit	Wise

iii) Formation of Verbs from Nouns and Adjectives

Nouns	Verbs	Nouns	Verbs
Bath	Bathe	Gold	Gild
Belief	Believe	Grass	Graze
Blood	Bleed	Half	Halve
Breath	Breathe	Knot	Knit
Brood	Breed	Price	Prize
Cloth	Clothe	Sale	Sell
Dog	Dodge	Sooth	Soothe
Drop	Drip	Tale	Tell
Food	Feed	Thief	Thieve
Glass	Glaze	Wreath	Wreathe

Adjectives *Verbs*

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B. SECONDARY DERIVATIVES:

Many English prefixes and suffixes are derived from Latin and Greek. A basic knowledge of commonly used affixes will help us learn English vocabulary much faster without the need to always look up words.

A prefix is a letter or group of letters added to the beginning of a word to make a new word: In the word "UNTIDY", 'UN-' is a prefix added to TIDY. UN- is a Latin word for NOT.

A suffix on the other hand is a letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to make another word. The suffix NESS added to the end of the word BRIGHT creates another word BRIGHTNESS.

Prefixes and suffixes are known as affixes. Affixes are produced by modifying or changing the meaning of a root word. For example, If we take a root word like HAPPY, we can see how affixes can change the meaning as in this example: prefix = UN, root word = TIDY and suffix = NESS.

The end result is UNTIDINESS. The awareness of this word formation among the lovers of English can dispel the darkness of dictionary mania.

It can be achieved through another process by drawing similar examples from the student's native language which further stimulates this awareness of word formation in languages as a whole. For example, in Chinese, the prefix BU is added to many root words to create an often negative version of a root word. For example, HAO in Chinese means GOOD. The opposite is simply formed by adding the prefix BU at the beginning of HAO: prefix=BU root word HAO and result is BUHAO which means BAD. Numerous opposites are formed in Mandarin Chinese by simply adding this prefix to root words.

If a teacher can make similar references from a student's native language background, it provides a springboard for the understanding of word formation in English as well. Most often we realize that the student had not even thought of this in terms of his or her own language. Since English is a language that has thousands of words from other languages, a brief etymology of commonly used prefixes and suffixes would do much good.

There are various examples of Prefixes. For instance, take the prefix OCT which comes from Latin OCTO meaning eight. If you consider its meaning, it is always near the number eight.

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Some examples of this kind are octogenarian, octagon and octave. Another word TELE which comes from Greek means far or distant. Various words are constructed with this root word such as television, telephone, telex and telecommunication.

These words are formed by an addition of the MORPHEMES i.e. an addition to the beginning of a word is a prefix and an addition to the end is a suffix. Let us discuss the native affixes and foreign affixes separately.

(A) NATIVE SUFFIXES: The following are some of the important native suffixes which are added to existing words to form new words. e.g.:

1. **By adding** - dom (O. E.-dom) e.g., Christendom, wisdom, kingdom, boredom, freedom, officialdom, etc. (Act. 318 Page 216, Ref.5)
2. **By adding** – hood (O. E.-had) e.g. boyhood, manhood, hardihood, childhood, adulthood etc. (Act. 318 Page 216, Ref.5)
3. **By adding** – ship (O. E.-scipe) as in ownership, companionship, friendship, authorship, scholarship, membership etc. (Act. 318 Page 216, Ref.5)
4. **By adding** – ness (O. E. –nes) as in goodness, kindness, bitterness, sweetness, boldness, firmness etc. (Act. 318 Page 216, Ref.5)
5. **By adding** –er (O. E. – ere) as in writer, reader, speaker, teacher etc. & +or as in conductor, inspector etc. (Act. 317 Page 216, Ref.5)
6. **By adding** – ster (O. E. – estre) as in songster, youngster, rimester, gamester (this suffix implies contempt) etc. (Act. 317 Page 216, Ref.5)

It is to be noted that all the above six suffixes are noun-suffixes added to nouns or adjectives or verbs to form noun.

Of the adjective suffixes surviving from Old English the following few are mentioned below:

7. **By adding** – ed (O. E. – ed) as in talented, renowned, landed, cultured etc. (Act. 320, Page 217, Ref.5)
8. **By adding** –en (O. E. – en) as in golden, silken, wooden, woolen etc. & +an as in Indian, Russian etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)
9. **By adding** –ful (O. E. – full) as in beautiful, powerful, fanciful, harmful, cheerful, mouthful, hopeful, sinful etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)
10. **By adding** –ish (O. E. – isc) as in English, Swedish, boyish, girlish, feverish, greenish, selfish, foolish etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)

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11. **By adding** –less (O. E.- leas) as in hopeless, penniless, endless, fearless, senseless, tactless, careless etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)
12. **By adding** –ly (O. E. – Lic) as in cowardly, lordly, beastly, scholarly, heavenly, brotherly, manly, earthly, lovely etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)
13. **By adding** –y (O. E. – ig) as in noisy, icy, creepy, spongy, earthy, panicky, watery, misty, sandy, dirty etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)
14. **By adding** – some (O. E. – sum) as in gladsome, burdensome, loathsome, wearisome, handsome, troublesome etc. (Act. 321, Page 217-218, Ref.5)

It is to be noted that all the above suffixes from (7) to (14) are adjective suffixes added mostly to nouns to form adjectives. Then again new verbs have been formed.

15. **By adding** the verbal suffix – en (O. E. –en) as in sweeten, weaken, harden, brighten, blacken, widen, lessen etc. These verbal suffixes are added to adjectives to form verbs.

The adverbial suffixes are added to nouns and adjectives to form adverbs. Of the adverbial suffixes the following few may be mentioned:

16. **By adding** –ly (O. E. – lice) as in greatly, sweetly, boldly, highly, courageously, sincerely, faithfully etc. (Act. 322, Page 218, Ref.5)
17. **By adding** - ward/wards (O. E. – weard/weardes) as in homeward, downwards, upwards, seawards etc. (Act. 322, Page 218, Ref.5)
18. **By adding** – wise (O. E. – wise) as in likewise, crosswise, otherwise, lengthwise, meritwise, rollwise etc. (Act. 322, Page 218, Ref.5)

Pages-119,126,128,133 - 4.4 Suffixes, (Reference No.2), (No. 4, 6 & other resources)

B) NATIVE PREFIXES: The following are some of the important native prefixes which are added to existing words to form new words. e.g.:

1. **By adding** mis – (O. E. –miss-) as in misprint, mislead, mismanage, misconception, mistake, misunderstand etc.
2. **By adding** un- (O. E. un-) as in unselfish, unhappy, unfair, unkind, unripe, unwise, unlock, unwanted etc.
3. **By adding** be- (O. E. be-) as in belittle, befool, beset, bemoan, behead, befriend, before, befall, belated etc.
4. **By adding** with- (O. E. with-) as in withstand, withdraw, withhold, within, without etc.

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5. **By adding** for- (O. E. for-) as in forbid, forget, forgive, forbear, forwards, forever, forlorn, forgo etc. & fore+ as in foresight, foretell, forewarn, foreword, forearm, forefinger, forecast etc.
Page No 288, (Reference No.1), (Reference No.4 & 6 & other resources)

(C) FOREIGN AFFIXES

As has already been mentioned, a large number of foreign affixes have become naturalized in the English language. The foreign affixes include mainly French, Latin and Greek affixes.

1) The French affixes are:

i) Suffixes : (French)

-age as in mileage, bondage, marriage, package, etc.
-ee as in trustee, payee, employee, consignee, etc.
-ment as in employment, treatment, atonement betterment, etc.
-esque as in picturesque, picaresque, Romanesque, etc.
(Act. 340, Page 225, Ref.5)

-ess (feminine suffix) as in governess, authoress, hostess, countess, poetess, etc.
But the Old English feminine ending in 'en' has been retained in modern English vixen.
(Page-2, Ch-1, Reference No.6 & other resources)

ii) Prefixes : (French)

en- as in endanger, enslave, endear, enlarge, enlist, enable, enrich etc.
demi- as in demi-god, demi-angel, demi-official, etc.
(Reference No.4, Page-3, Ch-1, Reference No.6)

2) The Latin affixes are:

i) Suffixes : (Latin)

-al as in arrival, refusal, renewal, removal, denial, etc.
(Page-2, Ch-1, Reference No.6)

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-ous as in dangerous, murderous, mountainous, etc.
-ation as in organisation, alteration, starvation
mystification, etc.

-ese as in Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese, etc.
-ion, tion sion, ssion, ture as in suspicion, decision,
action, relation, confusion, mission, mixture, fixture etc.
(Page-2, Ch-1, Reference No.6 & other resources)
-ify as in simplify, purify, justify etc.
-logy as in Sociology, Psychology, Philology, Biology etc.

ii) Prefixes : (Latin)

re- as in re-cover, re-gain, re-construct, re-appear, etc.
pro- as in pro-Indian, pro-slavery, pro-Vice-chancellor,
pro-British, etc. (Act.325, Page220, Ref.5)

pre- as in pre-arrange, pre-war, pre-Raphaelite, pre-natal,
pre-historic, prefix, prewar, prepaid etc.
(Act.325, Page220, Ref.5)

post- as in post-war, post-date, post-graduate, post-diluvian, etc.
(Act.325, Page220, Ref.5)

de- as in de-nationalise, degrade, devalue, deform etc.
(Act.324, Page219, Ref.5)

trans-as in transplant, trans-atlantic, transport, etc.
extra- as in extra-curricular, extra-mural, extra-hard, etc.
dis- as in disease, disclose, dishonest, dislike etc.
(Act.324, Page219, Ref.5)

im- as in improper, impure, impolite, imperfect etc.
in- as in indiscipline, inaction, incomplete, inability, in
decent, invisible, ineffective, incapable, inefficient etc.
(Act.324, Page219, Ref.5)

ir- as in irreligious, irresponsible, irrelevant, irregular,
irreparable etc.
il- as in illegal, illiterate, illogical, illegitimate, illegible,
illiberal etc.

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em- as in empower, embody, embalm, embitter etc.
non- as in non-violence, non-sense, non-vegetarian etc.
(Reference No.4, Page-3, Ch-1, Reference No.6 & other resources)

3) The Greek affixes are

i) *Suffixes : (Greek)*

-ism as in patriotism, Platonism, provincialism
egoism, Gandhism, Socialism, realism etc.
ise/-ize as in nationalise, Americanize, rationalise
naturalise, criticise, memorise etc. (Act. 341, Page 225, Ref.5)

-ist as in Platonist, novelist, dramatist, typist, etc.
-ite as in Israelite, Ibsenite, Pre-Raphaelite, ammonite, dynamite, etc.
(Act. 336, Page 225, Ref.5)
-ical (Gk-ic+Lat. -al) as in musical, logical, historical, tragical, economical, etc.
-ic as in heroic, specific, artistic, comic, enthusiastic etc.
(Act. 336, Page 225, Ref.5)

ii) *Prefixes : (Greek)*

a- as in apathetic, atheist, asexual, apathy etc.
anti- as in anti-Christ, anti-climax, anti-aircraft, anti-
national, etc. (Act. 334, Page 224, Ref.5)

pan- as in pantheism, pan-American, pan-ache etc. (Act. 334, Page 224, Ref.5)
hyper- as in hyper-acid, hyper-sensitive, hyper-bole etc.
(Act. 334, Page 224, Ref.5)
pseudo- as in pseudo-classical, pseudonym, pseudo- prophet,
pseudo-patriotic, pseudo-secular etc. (Act. 334, Page 224, Ref.5)

neo- as in neo-Christian, neo-classicism, etc.
auto- as in auto-suggestion, autobiography,
automobile, autocrat, auto-pilot, autograph etc.
(Reference No.4 & other resources)

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Now I would like to consider some other methods of word formation like composition, back formation and shortening, nouns as verbs and verbs as nouns, imitation or onomatopoeia etc.

II. COMPOSITION: Formation of new words by composition

Most natural languages have compound nouns. The positioning of the words (i. e. the most common order of constituents in phrases where nouns are modified by adjectives, by possessors, by other nouns, etc.) varies according to the language. While Germanic languages, for example, are left-branching when it comes to noun phrases (the modifiers come before the head), the Romance languages are usually right-branching.

In French, compound nouns are often formed by left-hand heads with prepositional components inserted before the modifier, as in *chemin-de-fer* 'railway' lit. 'road of iron' and *moulin à vent* 'windmill', lit. 'mill (that works)-by-means-of wind'.

In Turkish, one way of forming compound nouns is as follows: *yeldeğirmeni* 'windmill' (yel: wind, *değirmen-i*: mill-possessive); *demiryolu* 'railway'(demir: iron, *yol-u*: road-possessive).

In English language, words, particularly adjectives and nouns, nouns and nouns, verbs and nouns, verbs and prepositions, verbs and adverbs, adjectives and adjectives and gerunds and nouns etc are combined into compound structures in a variety of ways. And once they are formed, they sometimes metamorphose over time. A common pattern is that two words - fire fly, say - will be joined by a hyphen for a time - fire-fly - and then be joined into one word - firefly. In this respect, a language like German, in which words are happily and immediately linked one to the other, might seem to have an advantage. There is only one sure way to *know* how to spell compounds in English: use an authoritative dictionary.

Another important point is that modifying compounds are often hyphenated to avoid confusion. The New York Public Library's Writer's Guide points out that an old-furniture salesman clearly deals in old furniture, but an old furniture salesman would be an old man. We probably would not have the same ambiguity, however, about a used car dealer. When compounded modifiers precede a noun, they are often hyphenated: part-time teacher, fifty-yard-wide field, fire-resistant curtains, and high-speed chase. When those same modifying words come after the noun,

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however, they are not hyphenated: a field fifty yards wide, curtains that are fire resistant, etc. The second-rate opera company gave a performance that was first rate.

Comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are hyphenated when compounded with other modifiers: the highest-priced car, the shorter-term loan. But this is not always the case: the most talented youngster. Adverbs, words ending in *-ly*, are not hyphenated when compounded with other modifiers: a highly rated bank, a partially refunded ticket, publicly held securities.

Sometimes hyphenated modifiers lose their hyphens when they become compound nouns: A clear decision-making process was evident in their decision making. The bluish grey was slowly disappearing from the bluish-grey sky. This is not always so, however: your high-rise apartment building is also known as a high-rise.

When modifying a person with his or her age, the compounded phrase is hyphenated: my six-year-old son. However, when the age comes after the person, we don't use a hyphen. My son is six years old. He is, however, a six-year-old.

Some other very simple methods of forming a new word are to join two or more existing elements and the new words thus formed are called COMPOUNDS. Here is a list given below compiled from different resources.

1. Free Compounds

In such compounds the second element expresses a general meaning which is modified or limited by the first.

Rail+way = railway, apple-tree, steam-ship, weekend, pocket-money etc.

Even with free compounds we may have long strings of words like: railway refreshment room, waste-paper basket, New Year Eve, Fancy dress ball, Republic-day parade etc. These can be isolated to form a new compound.

2. Fixed Compounds

Some fixed compounds have been formed in which one part can not be separated from the other, e.g.

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Daisy and Nostril were originally formed by joining together two words each i.e. day's and eye (dayes-eye) and O.E. nosu and thyrel (hole) respectively. These words later became fixed as 'Daisy' & 'Nostril'.

3. Compound Nouns may be formed from:

- a) Adjective + Noun; as
Sweetheart, easy-chair, blackboard, highway, nobleman, strong-hold, quick-silver, shorthand etc.
 - b) Noun + Nouns; as
Moonlight, chess-board, ringleader, teaspoon, horse-power, manservant etc.
 - c) Verb + Noun; as
Daredevil, scarecrow, telltale, spendthrift, hangman, pickpocket, breakfast etc.
N.B. some compounds of this nature are used as adjectives e.g. know-nothing (fellow), lack-lusture (eye), make-shift (arrangement) etc.
 - d) Verb + Preposition; as
Between, show-off etc.
 - e) Verb + Adverb; as
Break-up, Set-up, knock-out, die-hard, send-off, drawback, lock-up, go-between etc.
 - f) Gerund + Noun; as
Stepping-stone, spelling,-book, blotting paper, walking-stick etc.
 - g) Adverb / preposition + Noun; as
Overcoat, downfall, afternoon, bypath, inmate etc.
 - h) Adverb + Verb; as
Outset, upkeep, outcry, income, outcome, etc.
 - i) Agent-noun + Adverb; as
Passer-by, runner-up, looker-on etc.
 - j) Phrases as single words; as
Father-in-law, brother-in-law, man-of-war etc.
- Page No 286, (Reference No.1, Reference No.4 & other resources)

4. Compound Adjectives may be formed from:

- a) Noun + Adjective / Participle; as
Trustworthy, bloodthirsty, worldwide, pennywise, homesick, skin-deep, purse-proud, lifelong, sky-blue, heart-rendering, ear-piercing, bed-ridden, love-lorn etc.
- b) Adjective + Adjective; as
Dark-blue, all-important, red-hot, lukewarm etc.
- c) Adverb + Adjective; as

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- Ever-young, over-anxious, under-ripe, ever-green.
- d) Adjective + Participle; as
Long-suffering, ever-lasting, never-ending, well-deserved, out-spoken, far-seen, inborn etc.
 - e) Verb + Noun; as
Break-neck, lack-lusture, make-shift, know-nothing etc.
 - f) Adjective + Noun; as
Bare-foot etc.
 - g) Pronoun + Noun; as
One-man (Show) one-rupee (note) etc.
 - h) Ordinal Number + Noun; as
First-hand, second-hand, third-rate etc.
- Page No 287, (Reference No.1) & (Reference No.4,5)

5. Compound Verbs may be formed from:

- a) Verb + Preposition; as
Give up, break up, take over, boil down, set in etc.
- b) Noun + Verb; as
Waylay, backbite, typewrite, browbeat, earmark.
- c) Adjective + Verb; as
Safe-guard, white-wash, fulfill, etc.
- d) Adverb + Verb; as
Overthrow, foretell, undertake, overhear, upset etc
(Page No 287, Ref No.1), (Ref No.4 & Page No. 308,309,310 Ref.5)

6. Novel Compounds by Poets:

Poets enjoy great liberty in the invention of novel compounds which would be inadmissible in prose, e.g.

Heaven-kissing hill, young-eyed cherubims (Shakespeare), silver-dropping tears, self-consuming care (Spenser), heart-easing mirth, dewy feathered sleep (Milton), Purple-stained mouth, full-throated case (Keats), long-wished-for and down-lapsing thought (Tennyson).

7. Rhyming compounds by comic writers:

Englishmen are very fond of using them, e.g.

Bye-bye, hush-hush, goody-goody, riff-raff, shilly-shally, ding-dong, hotch-potch, hoity-toity, namby-pamby etc. (Reference No.4)

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III. COMPOUNDS WITH PREFIXES

With a handful of exceptions, compounds created by the addition of a prefix are not hyphenated: anteroom, antisocial, binomial, biochemistry, coordinate, counterclockwise, extraordinary, infrastructure, interrelated, intramural, macroeconomics, metaphysical, microeconomics, midtown, minibike, multicultural, neoromantic, nonviolent, overanxious, postwar, preconference, pseudointellectual, reunify, semiconductor, socioeconomic, subpar, supertanker, transatlantic, unnatural, underdeveloped etc.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

There are certain exceptions in its uses:

compounds in which the second element is capitalized or a number:

anti-Semitic, pre-1998, post-Freudian

compounds which need hyphens to avoid confusion

un-ionized (as distinguished from unionized), co-op

compounds in which a vowel would be repeated (especially to avoid confusion)

co-op, semi-independent, anti-intellectual (but reestablish, reedit)

compounds consisting of more than one word

non-English-speaking, pre-Civil War

compounds that would be difficult to read without a hyphen

pro-life, pro-choice, co-edited

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

IV. NOUNS AS VERBS AND VERBS AS NOUNS

There are various processes by means of which nouns and verbs are formed from each other as new words by adding nothing at all. Let us consider a few processes.

a) **Formation of new words by making nouns and verbs of the same root exactly like one another**

e.g. Old English 'Lufu' (love) -noun and Old English 'Lufian' (to love) -verb, both coming from the same root 'luf', became love. Some other native and French words such as sleep, deal, drink, arm, blame, change etc.

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- b) **Formation of Homonym Verbs** (Gr. Homos = the same; onoma = name). Such as Head, shoulder, face & eye are also used as Homonym verbs.
- c) **Formation of Nouns from Verbs which had no corresponding nouns.**
e.g. Glance, bend, cut, build, go, find, kill etc are also used as a noun unchanged.
- d) **Formation of Doublets:**
Words derived from the same original elements, but differing in form and generally differing in meaning are called doublets.
e.g. 'bath' & 'glass' were Nouns and the Verbs were 'bathe' and glaze respectively. Gradually from these Nouns and Verbs doublets were formed. So we have now 'bath' and 'glass' both as Nouns and Verbs and 'bathe' and 'glaze' both as Verbs and Nouns.
- e) **Formation of Nouns and Verbs by the alternation of CH and K.**
e.g. Speak (V) & Speech (N) Stick (V) & Stitch (N) Bake (V) & Batch (N) Ake (V) O.E. & Ache (N).
- f) **Formation of a Noun from a Verb or a Verb from Noun by changing the place of Accent.**
e.g. fo'recast (N) foreca'st (V), im'port (N) impo'rt (V), ac'cent (N) acce'nt (V)
Similarly an Adjective is also distinguished from a verb.
Fre'quent (Adj) freque'nt (V), ab'sent (Adj) abse'nt (V), Pr'esent (Adj) Prese'nt (V)
- g) **Oscillation between a Noun and a Verb.**
- i) In some cases a word which is originally a noun is then used as a verb also and then again from this verb a new noun is formed in a somewhat different sense.

Noun	Verb	Noun
Smoke (smoke of chimney)	Smoke (to emit smoke)	Smoke (to smoke)
Gossip (idle talker)	Gossip (to talk idly)	Gossip (idle talk)

- ii) Similarly a verb is used as a noun also, then a new verb is formed in a different sense.

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Verb	Noun	Verb
Frame (to form)	Frame (a border for picture)	Frame (to set in a frame)

iii) In the same way an Adjective is used as a Verb also, then a new Noun is formed in a different sense.

Adjective	Verb	Noun
Faint (weak)	Faint (to become weak)	Faint (a fainting fit)

In all the cases above we find that there is a kind of Pendulum like swinging of a word from one point to another. That's why it is called "Oscillation among Noun, Verb and Adjective. (Reference No.4 & other resources)

V. BY BACK FORMATION AND SHORTENING

(1) BACK FORMATION

It is the name given to the process in which a new word is formed by subtracting the ending which is really an integral part of the word.

a) Back formation from the words:

- i) **Dropping of "ing" from the back:**
To sidle from sidling, to grovel from grovelling, to darkle from darkling.
- ii) **Dropping of "Y" from the back:**
greed, pup, pet, gloom were formed by subtracting "Y" from the back.
- iii) **Dropping of "er" / "ar" from the back:**
beg, burgle, hawk were formed by subtracting "er" from beggar, burglar and hawker which are not agent nouns. Similarly "edit" from editor (lat.) donate from donator (Lat.) (O.E.)

b) Back formation from compound:

New words can be formed by subtracting "er", "ing", "ed" from the back.
e.g. Book-keep from book keeping, typewrite from typewriter, matchmake from matchmaker, henpeck from henpecked, merrymake from merrymaking etc,

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(Reference No.4 & other resources)

(2) **SHORTENING**

Shortening or abbreviation is the name given to the process by which a long word, native or foreign, or even a phrase is clipped to produce a handy word.

a) By shortening of longer words through regular phonetic development:

Modern “Eight” has been formed from O.E. ‘Eahta’. Modern “Fowl” has been formed from O. E. “Fugal”. Similarly “Lord” and “Miss” have been formed from O. E. ‘Hlaford’ and ‘Missis’ (mistress)

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

b) By clipping of long foreign words:

e. g. “Teck” from ‘detected’, “Bus” from ‘omnibus’, “Phone” from ‘telephone’, “Photo” from ‘photograph’, “Cab” from ‘cabriolet’, “Sov” from ‘sovereign’, “Jap” from ‘Japanese’, “Vet” from ‘veterinary surgeon’, “Gov” from ‘governor’, “Matric: from ‘matriculation’, “Caps” from ‘capital letters’, “Exam” from ‘examination’, “Bike” from ‘bicycle’, “Mob” from ‘mobile vulgus’.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

c) By shortening of words by dropping the weak syllable at the beginning:

e. g. size from a size, sport from disport etc.

Sometimes both forms are preserved e.g. “mend and amend”, “tend and attend” “sample and example” and “spy and espy” etc.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

d) By shortening of phrases or long compounds into words:

e.g. zoo for zoological gardens, taxi from taxi meter-cabriolet’ good bye for God be with you etc.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

VI. FORMATION OF NEW PORTMANTEAU WORDS THROUGH TELESCOPING

Telescoping is the method of forming new words by combining two or more terms into one that is known as “portmanteau word”. The verb “to don” and “to doff” are the results of the combination of “do on” & “do off” (i.e. “to put on” and to put off) respectively.

Other instances are

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Tragi-comedy	comes from	tragedy+comedy
Melodrama	comes from	melody+drama
Lunch	comes from	Lump+hunch
Brunch	comes from	breakfast+Lunch
Flurry	comes from	flaw+hurry
Galump	comes from	Gallop+triumphant

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

VII. FORMATION OF NEW WORDS FROM NAMES OF PLACES AND PERSONS

As the history of languages moved forward, the languages were enriched with various such words which were originated from names of famous persons or places. Observe some examples given below.

i) From names of places

‘Canter’ from Canterbury, ‘Calico’ from Calicut, where it was first made.

‘Guinea’ from New Guinea, where it was coined from gold.

‘Muslin’ from Mussolo, a town in Mesopotamia means a kind of fine & soft cotton cloth used for women’s dresses, curtains etc.

‘Morocco’ a kind of leather made from goat skin, first produced in Moracco from where the name comes.

‘Sherry’ a kind of wine, coming from Xeres where this type of wine was made.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

ii) From Names of persons

‘Sandwich’ from John Montago, 4th Earl of Sandwich is used as Noun & Verb also.

‘Pander’ from Pandarus, a character in Shakespeare’s Troilus and Cresside.

‘Quixotic’ from Don Quixote, hero of the Spanish Romance meaning ridiculously romantic.

‘Boycott’ from Captain Boycott an Irish landlord.

‘Guy’ from Guy Fawkes of the Gun powder Plot of real life, means a queer looking man.

‘Cardigan’ named after the Earl of Cardigan, a great figure in the Crimean war.

‘Guillotine’ named after Dr. Guillotine who designed it at the beginning of the French Revolution (1789) means ‘an instrument of execution’.

‘Mackintosh’ named after Charles Mackintosh who invented it in 1843.

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‘Stentorian’ derived from the name of Stentor who was a Greek Warrior in the Illiad, means a powerful voice.

‘Herculean’ derived from Hercules of Greek mythology means possessing prodigious strength.

‘Panic’ derived from Pan, God of flocks in Gr. Mythology means unreasoning fear.

‘Phaeton’ derived from phaethon of Gr. Mythology who drove a chariot near the sun, means a kind of vehicle.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

VIII. FORMATION OF NEW WORDS THROUGH IMITATION OR ONOMATOPOEIA

Some words in English etymology were derived through the process of imitation or onomatopoeic. e.g. cuckoo, quack-quack and bow-wow are formed in imitation of the cries of the cuckoo, duck and dog. Among other words echoing some sound may be mentioned: Bang, Twitter, Buzz, Click, Whizz, Rumble, Hiss, Giggle, Titter etc.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

IX. FORMATION OF NEW WORDS FROM OBSCURE ORIGIN

The last group of English terms comprises a certain number of words which, at a certain moment, have been formed or created nobody knows from where, the Etymology of which has hitherto baffled all the endeavour of the philologists.

E.g. bad, big, lad, lass, fit, dad, jump, crease, job, fun, blight, chum, fuss, jam, hoax, stunt, slum, gloat, boy, girl, pig, dodge, fog, cut, bit, pun, hump etc.

(Reference No.4 & other resources)

For Additional Help

The Chicago Manual of Style can be of great help to the students of English etymology and the researchers as well which provides a lot of space to compounded modifiers and nouns. It has categorized compounds and word-formation into various types, and helps us discover principles of spelling (and some really strange exceptions). The rules for compounding words change over the years, and the lovers of vocabulary might even find different versions in different dictionaries. It is especially helpful because it tries to define the principles by which such decisions are made.

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CONCLUSION

Although there is no universally agreed-upon guideline regarding the use of compound words hyphenated compounds in English, in recent decades written English has displayed a noticeable trend towards increased use of compounds. Recently, many words have been made by taking syllables of words and compounding them, such as pixel (picture element) and bit (binary digit). This is called a syllabic abbreviation.

The history of English does not indicate a probability that English writers will ever universally omit the hyphen in compounding. On the contrary, grammarians and philologists all give evidence in favor of hyphenated compounds, but there is an obvious difference in the case being that they are not systematic or thorough in this matter.

The debate over the issue of hyphenated or non-hyphenated compound will continue to get the attention of the researchers across the globe, but to be practical; it can be accepted as an undeniable truth of English etymology. W. D. Whitney, for instance, in his book on "The Life and Growth of Language," speaks of "a process which the general history of language shows to be more important than any other," and then says: "It is the composition of words, the putting two independent elements together to form a single designation." He shows that he means hyphenated as well as continuous compounds by citing rest'-day, learning-knights, head-dress; and his book abounds in hyphenated compounds many of them improperly so written. Max Mueller's books are very much like Professor Whitney's in this respect, and so are the works of all our best writers.

The formation of words has been a regular development throughout the etymological history; the conjugation and assimilation of different words in languages is a phenomenon. It is a never-ending process which will bring-forth new words and phrases to be well-accepted by all – the students as well as the grammarians. The English language will keep enriching and flourishing in terms development of vocabulary and formation of new words or compounds in leaps and bounds and enlightening the imagination of the researchers.

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