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HOW SIMPLE ARE SIMPLE WORDS?

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Abstract. *The article deals with changes of the morphological composition of English words and reveals the complex structure of modern 'simple' words regardless of their origin. Based on the data of etymological analysis, the author provides examples of amalgamation of word components and points at the unidirectionality of the process of structural change.*

Key words: *amalgamation, history of English words, morphological composition, language change, morpheme boundary*

Introduction.

During their university years, students of linguistics are supposed to develop and display certain skills at philological analysis, sentence parsing and word parsing being among them. Sentence parsing implies a comprehensive analysis of syntactic structures and their constituents in terms of the approach chosen (e.g. functional, generative, semantic, communicative, etc.).

Word parsing reveals a learner's capability to single out the morphological composition of a word in terms of the typology of morphemes (such as a root morpheme, a prefix, a suffix, an infix, and a termination). A word stem is usually defined as including all types of morphemes except for a termination, or case inflection, e.g. (here and in what follows, hyphenation is used to point to the structure of a word) *book-s*, *postgraduate-s*, *overreact-ed*, *refresh-ing*, etc. Based on their word-formation pattern, the following structural groups of words are usually distinguished, namely:

(1) simple, i.e. those consisting of one root morpheme only, e.g. *dog*, *cat*, *hand*, *boy* (n); *run*, *hit*, *be*, *smile* (v); *red*, *small*, *long* (adj.), *fast* (adj., adv.), etc.;

(2) derived, i.e. those having one root morpheme and a prefix, or a suffix, or both, e.g. *pre-war* (adj.), *blu-ish* (adj.), *un-eat-able* (adj.), *un-thought-ful* (adj.); *teach-er* (n), *grow-th* (n); *re-make* (v), *loud-ly* (adv), *care-less-ly* (adv), etc.;

(3) compound, i.e. consisting of two (or more) root morphemes, e.g. *X-ray* (n), *flower-bed* (n), *looker-on* (n), *smart-phone* (n); *lemon-yellow* (adj.), *king-size* (adj.), *part-time* (adj.), *open-minded* (adj.); *proof-read* (v), *baby-sit* (v), *black-mail* (v), etc.

There is no need here dwelling on a wide variety of types of compounds or derivative affixes; any textbook on lexicology can provide that sort of information (see also [2; 3]). The *focus of this article* is on the words that today are referred to as simple, but they are not so from a historical perspective. The *aim of the article* is to zoom in the etymology of these words and to disclose to the reader their composition. The main *reference source* used in our research is the etymological dictionary [5].

Discussion. The scope of words to be considered in this article includes: (a) negation *not*; (b) nouns of Germanic origin; (c) loan words. It is quite understandable that there is no need tracing the historical development and semantic changes of *all*

native words or borrowings --- this is what etymological dictionaries are supposed to do. For the present research purpose, the chosen amount of lexemes is sufficient to outline the general (universal?) trend in the domain of word-formation. Let us start with the negative particle 'not'.

(a) 'Not' is the mid-13th century form of the negation 'noht' (*naht*) "in no way" originating from Old English *nawiht* (*nowiht*) "nothing", literally "no whit," from *na* "no" (from Proto-Indo-European root *ne- "not") + *wiht* "thing, creature, being". The OE form is cognate with other Germanic forms, such as Old Saxon *neowiht* "nothing," Old High German *niwiht*, Gothic *ni waihts*, Dutch *niet*, German *nicht* [5]. It is from *nawiht* (*nowiht*) that there developed the mathematical meaning 'zero' (Modern English *nought/ naught*), on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the meaning 'good for nothing' > 'morally bad, wicked', that gave rise to the modern adjective *naughty*. Therefore, it becomes obvious that the negative particle 'not' (as well as modern nouns 'naught' and 'nought') is a result of amalgamation of the two stems.

(b) The native words (i.e. the ones of Germanic origin) to be considered here are *woman, husband, lady, lord, daisy, window, ceiling, friend*.

The noun 'woman' historically is a compound of Old English *wif* "woman" + *man* "human being", literally "woman-man". In OE texts it is represented by the forms *wimman, wiman* (plural *wimmen*) and *wifman* (plural *wifmen*) [5].

The noun 'husband' is an Old English compound, too, originating from OE noun *hūs* "house" and present participle *bondi* 'dwelling', meaning "householder, dweller" [5]. It is assumed that the noun was a borrowing from Old Norse *husbondi* (literally "house-dweller"). In Modern English, this noun is not considered as a compound.

Another pair of noteworthy words are 'lady' and 'lord', both coming from Old English compounds with a common component 'hlaf' 'bread, loaf'. The etymological analysis gives the following chains:

OE *hlaf* "bread, loaf" + *weard* "keeper, guardian" → OE *hlaford* "master of a household, ruler, husband", literally "one who guards the loaves" → mid-13c., *laverd, loverd* → *lord*;

OE *hlaf* "bread" + *-dige* "maid" → OE *hlæfdige* (Northumbrian *hlafdia*, Mercian *hlafdie*), literally "bread-kneader" → c. 1200, *lafdi, lavede* → *lady* [5].

Obviously, the original meanings of the words have fallen into disuse. In Modern English, the metonymical connection of 'lady' and 'lord' with 'loaf' is far from being that transparent, and the two nouns have acquired new, additional senses in the path of development. (For more on the metonymical nature of semantic changes see: [4]).

Now, let us consider the next two nouns, 'daisy' and 'window'. At the first glance at their outer form, it is impossible to say what unites these words, except for their morphological composition: in Modern English, they both enter the 'simple' group. However, the etymological analysis reveals their *compound* structure in earlier history:

daisy (n) < c. 1300, *daiseie*, < Old English *dægesege*, from *dæges eage*, literally "day's eye";

window (n) < c. 1200, from Old Norse *vindauga*, from *vindr* "wind", literally "wind eye" [5].

Each of the words contains two noun stems ('day' + 'eye'; 'wind' + 'eye') that merged over time into one, now indivisible, stem. It can be noted in passing that compounding was a common and widely used way of word formation in Old English. Suffice it to say that Old Norse *vindauga* replaced Old English *eagbyrl*, literally "eye-hole," and *eagduru*, literally "eye-door" [5] – again, compound nouns.

Amalgamated can be not only compounds, but also derived words. Over the time, the structure of such words (e.g. 'a root morpheme + a suffix'; or 'a prefix + root morpheme', etc.) is reanalyzed, and, as a result, they are no more considered as derivatives. Take, for instance, '*ceiling*' and '*friend*', the modern English nouns. They both originate from a non-finite form of the corresponding *verb*, namely the present participle:

ceiling (n) < mid-14c., *celynge*, "act of paneling a room" < Middle English verb *ceil* "put a cover" < Old French *celer* "conceal," also "cover with paneling" (12c.) < from Latin *celare* "to hide" (from PIE root *kel- (1) "to cover, conceal, save") [5]. Here, '-ing' is a suffix of present participle (< OE -ung / -ing < Proto-Germanic *-unga-, *-inga-); being attached to a verb, it denoted an action in progress, also a completed action, and a result of the action. This set the ground to further externalize the action as a substantive. Hence, nouns can denote not only [(in-)animate] things but also processes perceived as such.

friend (n) < Old English *freond* "one attached to another by feelings of personal regard and preference," < from PIE *priy-ont-, "loving," present-participle form of root *pri- "to love" [5]. Here, '-ende' is an Old English present-participle suffix, also used to form adjectives from verbs. Strictly speaking, '*friend*' is, originally, not a noun, but a present participle '*loving, caring*'. The

'-nd' at the end of the word points to its participial essence.

(c) Loan words. English word stock is etymologically heterogeneous with overwhelming majority of words borrowed from or via Romance languages.

Let us consider the group of words: *energy* (n), *engine* (n), *envy* (n; v); *embarrass* (v), *embryo* (n), *empire* (n), *employ* (v); *episode* (n); *industry* (n), *instant* (adj.), *important* (adj.). They all have a common initial element of Proto-Indo-European origin, namely the root *en- meaning "in, near, at, within", assimilated to *em-/im-/in-* before -p-, -b-, -m-, -l-, and -r-. Once a root morpheme, it integrated into the following stem within a compound, thus losing its independent status and becoming a part of the next root morpheme. Here are some of the examples from [5]:

energy (n) < 1590s, "force of expression," < French *énergie* (16c.), < Late Latin *energia*, < Greek *energeia* "activity, action, operation," from *energōs* "active, working," < *en* "at" + *-ergos* "that works," from *ergon* "work, that which is wrought; business; action";

embarrass (v) < 1670s, "perplex, throw into doubt" < French *embarrasser* (16c.), literally "to block" < Italian *imbarazzo*, from assimilated form of *in-* "into, upon" (from PIE root *en "in") + Vulgar Latin **barra* "bar";

empire (n) < mid-14c., "territory subject to an emperor's rule;" in general "realm, dominion;" in Middle English generally of the Roman Empire. < Old French *empire*

"rule, authority, kingdom, imperial rule" (11c.) < Latin imperium "a rule, a command; authority, control, power; supreme power, sole dominion; military authority; a dominion, realm," from *imperare* "to command," from assimilated form of *in-* "in" (from PIE root **en-* "in") + *parare* "to order, prepare" (from PIE root **pere-* (1) "to produce, procure");

industry (n) < late 15c., "cleverness, skill" < Old French *industrie* "activity; aptitude, experience" (14c.) or directly from Latin *industria* "diligence, activity, zeal," from *indu* "in, within" (from PIE **endo-*, extended form of root **en-* "in") + stem of *struere* "to build" (from PIE root **stere-* "to spread");

instant (adj.) < mid-15c., "now, present, of the moment, current," < Old French *instant* "near, imminent, immediate, at hand; urgent, assiduous" (14c.) and directly from Medieval Latin *instantem* (nominative *instans*), in classical Latin "present, pressing, urgent," literally "standing near," present participle of *instare* "to urge, to stand near, be present (to urge one's case)," from *in-* "in" (from PIE root **en-* "in") + *stare* "to stand," from PIE root **sta-* "to stand, make or be firm."

A few more examples are worthy of attention. The Modern English words *prince* (n) and *receive* (v) seem to have little (if anything) in common. However, a historical retrospective reveals the opposite: they both contain the Proto-Indo-European root **kap* 'to grasp' as one of components, which proves their compound composition in the earliest history of the word:

prince (n) < c. 1200, "governor, overseer, magistrate; leader; great man, chief; preeminent representative of a group or class" (mid-12c. as a surname), < Old French *prince* "prince, noble lord" (12c.), < Latin *princeps* (genitive *principis*) "first person, chief leader; ruler, sovereign," noun use of adjective meaning "that takes first," < *primus* "first" + root of *capere* "to take" (from PIE root **kap* "to grasp");

receive (v) < c. 1300, *receiven*, "take into one's possession, accept possession of," < Old North French *receivre* (< Old French *recoivre*) "seize, take hold of, pick up; welcome, accept," < Latin *recipere* "regain, take back, bring back, carry back, recover; take to oneself, take in, admit," < *re-* "back," + *-cipere*, combining form of *capere* "to take" (from PIE root **kap* "to grasp") [5].

Similarly, the modern English verbs *introduce* and *educate*, first mentioned in English texts in the 15th century, come from the corresponding compound verbs of Latin origin and have one component in common, too:

educate (v) < mid-15c., *educaten*, "bring up (children), to train," < Latin *educatus*, past participle of *educare* "bring up, rear, educate", related to *educere* "bring out, lead forth," from *ex-* "out" + *ducere* "to lead," from PIE root **deuk-* "to lead" [5]. Today, 'e-' in *educate* and related words is not seen as a prefix but is included into the root morpheme. The boundary between the word-formation morphemes has, so to say, worn out. The same is true for *elude*, *emaciate*, *emaculate*, *emerge*, *evaporate* and related words.

introduce (v) < early 15c., "convey or bring (something) in or into," < Latin *introducere* "to lead in, bring in," < *intro-* "inward, to the inside" (from PIE **ent(e)ro-*, suffixed form of root **en-* "in") + *ducere* "to lead" (from PIE root **deuk-* "to lead") [5]. Attention should be drawn to the fact that PIE **en-t(e)ro-* is the suffixed form of root **en-* "in". To put it differently, the ancient root together with the

attached suffix is embedded into a new structure; this is a good illustration of the fractal-type feature of word-formation processes (more on fractals in language see [1]).

Conclusion.

Language is subject to change, like everything else in this world [2; 3]. The word-stock of any human language hides a lot of fascinating facts about the life, history, and culture of its speakers. Every word has its own history, too. Tracing the diachronic trajectory of a word may reveal inevitable changes in its semantic volume and usage. The examples presented in this article suggest unidirectionality of structural change from a compound to a derivative to a simple word through amalgamation involving the morpheme boundary loss.

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