

# **Unit 2**

# **DERIVATION & INFLECTION**

# DERIVATION

**DEFINITION:** Derivation is *'the formation of new words by adding affixes to other words or morphemes.'*

**Example:**

**sane + -ity = sanity**

→ the noun *sanity* is derived from the adjective *sane* and the noun forming suffix *-ity*.

**careful + -ly = carefully**

→ the adverb *carefully* is derived from the adjective *careful* and the adverb forming suffix *-ly*.

# Types of Derivational affixes

- **Class-changing derivational affixes** change *the word class* (also called *the grammatical category* or *the part of speech*) of the words to which they are attached.
- Thus, when **a verb** is conjoined with the suffix *-able*, the result is **an adjective**, as in *desire* + *-able* or *adore* + *-able*.
- Some more examples:

## noun to adjective

boy + *-ish*

virtu(e) + *-ous*

Elizabeth + *-an*

## verb to noun

acquit(t) + *-al*

clear + *-ance*

accus(e) + *-ation*

## adjective to adverb

exact + *-ly*

quiet + *-ly*

## noun to verb

mortal + *-ise*

vaccin(e) + *-ate*

beauty + *-fy*

# Types of Derivational affixes

- *Class-maintaining derivational affixes* do not change *the word class* of the words to which they are attached.

- Many *prefixes* fall into this category:

*a-* + mortal

*mono-* + theism

*auto-* + biography

*re-* + print

*ex-* + wife

*semi-* + annual

*super-* + human

*sub-* + minimal

- There are also *suffixes* of this type:

vicar + *-age*

New Jersey + *-ite*

Americ(a) + *-an*

pun + *-ster*

# Morphological rules

(1) VERB + -able = ‘able to be VERB-ed’  
ACCEPT + -able = ‘able to be ACCEPTed’

- The derivational class-changing adjective-forming suffix {-able} has three allomorphs:
  1. /-ə**bl**/, which occurs at the end of English words: *visible* /ˈvɪzə**bl**/, *desirable* /dəˈzaɪərə**bl** /
  2. /-ə**b**/, which occurs before the adverb-forming suffix {-ly<sub>1</sub>}: *visibly* /ˈvɪzə**b**li/, *desirably* /dəˈzaɪərə**b**li/
  3. /-əˈ**bl**/, which occurs before the noun-forming suffix {-ity}: *visibility* /ˌvɪzəˈ**bl**əti/, *desirability* /dəˌzaɪərəˈ**bl**əti/.

# Morphological rules

(2) un- + ADJECTIVE = 'not + ADJECTIVE'

un- + TRUE = 'not + TRUE'

Among the words which have been derived from this morphological rule are:

*unjust,*

*unkind,*

*unfair,*

*unfit,*

*unavoidable,*

*unrelieved,*

*unscientific,*

*unshrinking,*

*unskilled,*

*etc.*



## **Exercise**

Give some examples for the following morphological rules.



RULE	Meaning of the prefix/suffix	EXAMPLE
0. <b>un-</b> + ADJECTIVE =ADJECTIVE	<b>not</b>	unjust, unkind, unfair
1. VERB + <b>-al</b>		
2. VERB + <b>-able</b>		
3. VERB + <b>-ment</b>		
4. <b>re-</b> + VERB		
5. <b>un-</b> + VERB		
6. NOUN + <b>-ful</b>		
7. NOUN + <b>-ous</b>		
8. NOUN + <b>-less</b>		
9. NOUN + <b>-ly</b>		
10. NOUN + <b>-y</b>		

# INFLECTION

- **Definition:** Inflection is *‘the process of adding an affix to a word or changing it in some other way according to the rules of the grammar of a language’*.
- **Example:**
  - English verbs are inflected for singular subject:
    - *I work.*
    - *He works.*
    - *She works.*
  - Most nouns may be inflected for plural:
    - *box – boxes*
    - *flower – flowers*
    - *man – men*

# Various kinds of inflection

- Noun inflection
- Verb inflection
- Adjective & Adverb inflection

# Noun inflection

- Almost all English nouns have two forms:
  - *the plain form* (also called *the unmarked form*): ‘a book’ or ‘the book’
  - *the inflected form* (also called *the marked form*): ‘books’
- The *plain form* and *its three inflected forms* together make up *a four-form inflectional noun paradigm*, which is *a set of relative forms of a noun*.

one plain form (= the stem)	three inflected forms (= the stem + inflectional suffixes)
mother (singular noun)	mothers (plural noun) mother ‘s (singular-possessive noun) mothers’ (plural-possessive noun)

- Not all nouns have three inflected forms.

# Verb inflection

- The inflections of a verb are more complicated than those of a noun: the *plain form* and *its four inflected forms* together make up *a five-form inflectional verb paradigm*.
- *The paradigm of an irregular verb* has four inflected forms: *breaks*, *breaking*, *broke*, and *broken*.
- Although the past simple and the past participle inflected forms of a regular verb are just the same, they carry quite different meanings.
- Therefore, it is much more convenient to assign **all English verbs to a five form inflectional paradigm**.

one plain form (= the stem)	four inflected forms (= the stem + inflectional suffixes)
work	works, working, worked, worked
break	breaks, breaking, broke, broken

# Adjective & Adverb inflection

- Most one-syllable adjectives and adverbs & many two-syllable adjectives have a **comparative** form with an ‘**-er**’ inflection & a **superlative** form with an ‘**-est**’ inflection.
- **There is a three-form inflectional paradigm (one plain form + two inflectional forms) for adjectives of 1 or 2 syllables and for monosyllabic adverbs** though it does not apply to all members of either the adjective or the adverb class.

	one plain form (= the stem)	two inflected forms (= the stem + inflectional suffixes)	
	POSITIVE	COMPARATIVE	SUPERLATIVE
ADJECTIVES	short big happy pure	shorter bigger happier purer	shortest biggest happiest purest
ADVERBS	fast hard	faster harder	fastest hardest

# **Homework**

Distinguish derivation from inflection.  
Support your answer.