



STATE AND QUALITY ENGLISH SUFFIXES AND THEIR MORPHOPHONEMIC AND MORPHOSEMANTIC REALIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT:

Language is a communication system which operates with the help of symbols. Traditionally, word is the minimal grammatical, phonemic and meaningful unit of language. The words are the names given to persons, places, things, animals, feelings, wishes, states, qualities, actions, processes, methods and what not. Language has a word for everything that comes into its compass. Word is the principal unit that represents the phonological, grammatical, morphophonemic and semantic systems. It is the biggest unit of morphology and the smallest unit of grammar. Words are composed of morphemes. Affixes are bound morphemes. English affixes are chiefly classified into prefixes and suffixes. Like words affixes too exhibit the phonological, grammatical, morphophonemic and semantic systems. That is why they are considered linguistic signs. Like words, the derivational affixes signify the concepts like person, place, gender, state, quality, etc. These affixes may cause some phonemic changes in the bases to which they are appended. As they are used to form new words, they cause change in the meaning of the base. Hence, the affixes are significant from the phonemic and semantic points of view. The present paper is an attempt to enlist the suffixes of English implying the concepts of state and quality. It attempts to discuss the morphophonemic and morphosemantic aspects of these suffixes.

Key words: words, English suffixes, state, quality, morphophonemic, morphosemantic.

It has been rightly observed by Dr. Earnest Klein (1966), “What elements are to Chemistry, what the sounds are to music, are words to language. However, words are not only the elements of a language but also the history of the people speaking it. They are important milestones along the way leading to the majestic Palace of Human Knowledge” (X). Language is complex. It is a system that has subsystems. Hence it is a system of systems. Word is the

central unit that represents all the subsystems of language namely, the phonological system, the grammatical system, the morphophonemic system and the semantic system. It is simultaneously a phonological, grammatical and semantic unit. Word is the biggest unit of morphology and the smallest unit of grammar. To Hans Marchand, “word is the smallest independent, indivisible unit of speech, susceptible of being used in isolation” (1960: 1).

Affixation is the most common way of forming new words in the languages of the world (Bauer, 1988). Affixation is an umbrella term that covers word-formation processes like prefixation, suffixation, infixation, semi-affixation and neo-classical compounds. It means attaching affix(es) to the base. English suffixes are both derivational and inflectional. In English the grammatical concepts like number, person, tense, degree, and case are expressed by the inflectional suffixes. In this paper we will discuss the English suffixes of state and quality from phonemic and semantic points of view.

The suffixes of English signifying the concept of state/quality are enlisted below along with their morphophonemic and morphosemantic realizations:

1. -age:

-age is derived into English through loan words from French such as *language*, *courage* and others. It is used to form nouns. It is a polysemous suffix implying ‘state of /rank of ...’ as in *baronage*, ‘collection of...’ as in *leafage*, ‘measurement units’ as in *mileage*, ‘place of where’ as in *anchorage*, result of ...’ as in *breakage*, and ‘the cost of ...’ as in *postage*. -age derives nouns from verbs and nouns.

The pronunciation of -age is /ɪdʒ/. As it has a weak vowel, it is normally unstressed and causes no morphophonemic change.

2. -al:

As far as etymology is concerned, -al is a Latin suffix that came into English through French. It is added to verbs to form nouns as in *refuse* ~ *refusal*, *approve* ~ *approval*; to nouns to form adjectives as in *accident* ~ *accidental*, *culture* ~ *cultural*, *verb* ~ *verbal*, and many others. The suffix means ‘belonging /connected to ...’ as in *cultural*, *natural*.

The pronunciation of *-al* is /əl/. While forming nouns, *-al* generally does not affect the stress pattern of the base as in *approval*, *refusal* and others.

However, in forming adjectives, the derivative undergoes morphophonemic change. Either the penultimate or antepenultimate syllable in the derivative is stressed. For example, *nature* /'neɪtʃə/ → *natural* /'nætʃərəl/ in which /eɪ/ changes to /æ/; *adjective* /'ædʒɪktɪv/ → *adjectival* /'ædʒɪktɪvəl/ in which there is vowel mutation /ɪ/ → /aɪ/, and others.

This suffix causes not only stress shift but also change in the vowel of the base form.

-al deriving adjectives from nouns has variants like *-ial* and *-ical*, which cause the morphophonemic change as in *office* /'ɒfɪs/ → *official* /ə'fɪʃl/, *commerce* /'kɒməs/ → *commercial* /kə'mɜ:ʃl/, and others. Such examples show both consonant and vowel alternation along with the shift in the stress.

If *-ial* is added to words ending in *-ent*, *-ence*, the derivation results into alternation like:

/t/ → /ʃ/ as in *president* /'prezɪdənt/ ~ *presidential* /prezɪ'denʃl/

prudent /'pru:dənt/ ~ *prudential* /'pru:denʃl/

/s/ → /ʃ/ as in *reference* /'refərəns/ ~ *referential* /'refərənʃl/

Apart from the consonant alternation, *-al* causes vowel alternation /ə/ → /e/ as exemplified in the above words and shifts the main stress on the penultimate syllable.

Similarly, it results into /ə/ → /ɔ:/ vowel alternation as in

Editor /'edɪtə/ → *editorial* /edɪ'tɔ:rɪəl/

Visitor /'vɪzɪtə/ → *visitorial* /vɪzɪ'tɔ:rɪəl/

3. -ance/-ence:

-ance/-ence is derived into English from Latin through French. It means ‘state or quality’ as in *brilliance*, ‘process or action’ as in *assistance*. It is usually added to verbs to derive mostly abstract nouns.

-ance/-ence is pronounced /əns/. The suffix does not cause any morphophonemic change. Occasionally, it overlaps with *-ancy/-ency*, but functionally it is different from it (Marchand, 1960: 192).

4. -cy/-acy:

-cy is borrowed from Latin through French. It is normally a deadjectival nominal suffix that means ‘an abstract state, condition, or quality; a rank ...’, as in *bankruptcy* (state), *captaincy* (rank).

The pronunciation of *-cy/-acy* is /sɪ, əsɪ/. Most of the derivatives ending in *-cy* carry the main stress on the antepenultimate or ante- ante -penultimate syllable as in *ˈpiracy*, *ˈsecrecy*, *ˈregency*, *ˈaristocracy*, *ˈpermanency*, *ˈexcellency*.

According to Quinion, words with these suffixes are a subset of those ending in *-y* (of Latin origin); they derive from word stems that end in ‘*t*’, ‘*c*’, or ‘*k*’. Those ending in *-acy* derive from stems that have an ‘*a*’ before the final consonant (2004: 49).

5. -dom:

-dom is a native suffix developed out of a Germanic root related to the Old English *dom*. It is a denominal and deadjectival suffix deriving nouns denoting ‘state or condition of being ...’, as in *freedom*, *boredom*, and others; ‘the rank/area ruled by ...’, as in *kingdom*, *dukedom*, and others; and ‘the group of ...’ as in *officialdom*. *-dom* is pronounced /dəm/. It is a weak syllable. Accordingly, it is normally an unstressed suffix.

6. -ery/-ry:

-ery/-ry is a noun forming suffix. It is polysemous. It is borrowed into English through French from Latin. It means ‘a collectivity of ...’ as in *yeomanry*, *perfumery*, ‘condition or state of being...’ as in *slavery*, *prudery*, ‘a place

where/which is connected with' as in *fishery*, *bakery*, and 'practice of ...' as in *jugglery*, *carpentry*.

The pronunciation of *-ery/-ry* is /əɾɪ, rɪ/ with weak vowels. Hence, it is normally unstressed. However, orthographically it can cause change to the base. If the base ends in *-er*, its final 'r' is dropped as in *grocery*, *printery*.

7. **-hood:**

The origin of *-hood* is in Old English, *-hād* which was originally a noun denoting 'person, state, quality'. It is used to derive abstract nouns from concrete nouns. The suffix denotes 'the state/quality of ...' as in *childhood*, *falsehood*, and 'a group of the people of the type' as in *teacherhood*, *priesthood*.

The pronunciation of *-hood* is /hʊd/. It is an unstressed suffix. Normally, it does not cause any morphophonemic change.

8. **-ism:**

-ism is borrowed in English through French *-isme* via Latin from Greek *-ismos*, *-isma*. It means 'the action or result of' as in *criticism*, *witticism*, 'the state or quality of' as in *heroism*, *magnetism*, 'principles or belief' as in *Gandhism*, *Buddhism*, 'abnormal condition or illness caused by much' as in *alcoholism*, *cocainism* used to belong to medical field.

This suffix is attached to nouns to form abstract nouns. If *-ism* is attached to a free stem, it does not normally change the stress pattern, as in: *'terror* ~ *'terrorism*, *'classic* ~ *'classicism*. The suffix causes phonological alternation, when it is attached to adjective ending in /k/, /k/ becomes /s/ as in *classic* /'klæsɪk/ ~ *classicism* /'klæsɪsɪzəm/.

But when *-ism* is attached to a bound stem, the word normally takes stress on the antepenultimate syllable, as in *'exorcism* (Jones, 2006: 273).

9. **-ity:**

The suffix, *-ity* suffix is derived from Latin *-itas*, *-itatis* through French *-ite*. Normally, it forms derivatives from Latinate adjectives. It denotes 'qualities,

states, or properties' as in *capability*, *lovability*, *necessity*. It is a productive noun forming suffix.

The pronunciation of *-ity* is /ɪtɪ/ or /ətɪ/. All the derivatives in *-ity* are usually stressed on the antepenultimate syllable, e.g. *a'bility*, *pu'blicity*, *regu'lar**ity*, and many others. In *regular* → *regularity* it causes / ə / → /æ/ mutation. In this way, it causes change in the stress pattern of the base also.

-ity causes an alternation known as trisyllabic shortening or trisyllabic claxing by which Ingo Plag (2003: 92) means destressing and shortening of the stressed vowel or diphthong of the base word. However, it can be observed that the stressed syllable is shortened but not destressed as Plag observes. For example, *obscene* /əb'si:n/ ~ /əb'senətɪ/, *profound* /prə'faʊnd/ ~ /prə'fʌndətɪ/, *verbose* /vɜ:'bɔ:s/ ~ /vɜ:'bɔ:sətɪ/

Furthermore, morphophonemically *-ity* causes phonological non-automatic alternation /k/ → /s/. If the base adjective ends in /ɪk/, it is substituted by /ɪs/ as in the derivatives: *electric* /ɪ'lektrɪk/ ~ /ɪ,lek'trɪsətɪ/, *eccentric* /ɪk'sentrɪk/ ~ /ɪ,eksen'trɪsətɪ/, *authentic* /ɔ:'əentɪk/ ~ /ɔ:əen'tɪsətɪ/ , *public* /'pʌblɪk/ ~ /pʌb'lɪsətɪ/.

The above examples show not only /k/ → /s/ alternation but also change in the stress pattern of the base words.

10. **-ment:**

The suffix, *-ment* is derived from Latin *-mentum* through French *-ment*. It is a deverbal suffix used to form nouns. *-ment* means 'the act or result of...' as in *development*, *government*, 'the condition or state of being...ed' as in *equipment*, *advertisement*, and 'the place related to ...' as in *encampment*, *settlement*. The pronunciation of *-ment* is /mənt/. It is an unstressed suffix that causes no change in the stress pattern of the base to which it is appended.

11. –ness:

-ness is a native suffix of Germanic origin, developed out of Old English, *-nes(s)*. It is a deadjectival noun forming suffix that denotes ‘state, condition, quality of ...’ as in *goodness, brightness, clearness, faithfulness*. The examples show that the suffix *-ness* can be attached freely to native as well as foreign bases.

-ness can also be attached to pronouns (*thisness*), pronominal adverbs (*thereness*), locative particles (*outness*), phrases (*up-to-dateness*), numerals (*fourness*), comparative forms (*betterness*), and occasionally to nouns (*manness*) (Marchand, 1960: 271-272).

The suffix, *-ness* is pronounced /nəs/. Normally, *-ness* never carries any stress and does not alter the stress pattern of the base to which it is appended.

12. –ship:

-ship is a native suffix developed out of Old English *-scipe, -scype* which meant ‘related to shape’. This is an active polysemous suffix implying ‘state/condition of being ...’ as in *friendship, ownership*, ‘office, rank, dignity of ...’ as in *captainship, majorship*, ‘emoluments related to the position’ as in *fellowship, scholarship*, ‘respectful forms of address’ as in *Ladyship, Lordship*, ‘skill, art’ as in *musicianship, scholarship*, ‘institution’ as in *ensorship*, and ‘body of’ as in *membership, trusteeship*.

The pronunciation of *-ship* is /ʃɪp/. Generally, *-ship* is an unstressed suffix and naturally it shows no instance of morphophonemic changes in the derivatives formed out of it.

It can be observed that all the above mentioned English suffixes are synonymous in that they signify state/ quality. They are used to derive nouns. However, they have collocational restrictions. For instance, *purity* and *pureness* are allowed but *friendship* cannot be **friendity* or **friendness*.

To conclude, the familiarity with affixes is very essential in understanding the complex words semantically and morphophonemically. It is also essential for creating new words. Accordingly, research should be undertaken in this area

that remains less explored. This would help the learners to understand the orthographic and phonological structure and the meaning of the words.

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