

Implication of Learning and Teaching from Differences between Inflectional and Derivational Morphology

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ABSTRACT. *Is there any connection between inflectional morphology and derivational morphology? How can we take advantage of the differences between inflection and derivation into teaching and learning? In this paper, the definitions and the differences of inflection and derivation as well as the usage by teachers and learners are clearly expressed.*

KEYWORDS: *Inflectional; Derivational; Morphology; Lexis; Teaching*

1. Introduction

When talking about inflection and derivation, most of people will think about that is a complicated thing that they may not connect with it. However, Whiting, Marslen-Wilson, Shtyrov (2013) had indicated that some linguistic messages and information including inflection and derivation from spoken are referred to a successful comprehensive speech, which means it exists in the daily life. Within this paper, definitions and the major characteristics of inflection and derivation will be clearly present. The implications of both of them are listed out in the following parts. Some difficulties which will make confusion are in the paper as well. That may be given some ideas towards learning and teaching on the base of taking advantages of their features.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Inflection and Derivation

Before making some differences between inflectional morphology and derivational morphology, some basic definitions are needed to be mentioned. In the beginning, morpheme is a crucial term which means the smallest and indivisible unit of a word, and more importantly, it cannot be further divided into neither meaningful nor grammatical functional units. As for terms of inflection and derivation, Bauer (1983) indicated that it is complicated and indefinable to define some terms exactly like 'inflection' and 'derivation'. It needs some intuitive basis to distinct them fairly. Both of inflection and derivation differ in the endings of the words. More precisely, when it comes to inflection, tense, person, case, gender, number and so on are to be added to the end of the words which are named as inflectional categories that will not change a word's classes and meanings. Inflectional affixes are those extra elements that mentioned above adding to the words in order to indicate grammatical functions (Shamsan, 2015), which means that there is no influence for the meanings and word class. On contrary, as for derivation, it can be defined oppositely to that of inflection. Derivational paradigm, other than affix of tense, person, case and number, adding to a word can change its classes and meanings. In simple comprehension, derivational morphology is using some derivations to alter the meanings, which will result in forming a new word with a new appearance, a new meaning and a new class (Doyle, 2012). Aikhenvald (2007) also points out that derivational morphology is more connected with the new word creating a new meaning within it. On the other hand, inflectional morphology is just about the involvement of the grammatical meaning with changing the word class of its originality.

2.2 Differences between Inflectional Morphology and Derivational Morphology

In terms of the differences between inflectional morphology and derivational morphology, Doyle (2012) had indicated that the former is frequently used to distinguish from the latter. Consider the definition mentioned above, inflection and derivation are two totally converse concepts towards a word, one cannot be categorized to inflectional word at the same time derivational. According to Lieber (2010), seven types of inflections are

concluded (numbers, person, gender & noun class, case, tense & aspect, voice and mood). However, there are only four out of them are kept in English (numbers, case, tense, and mood):

- a. numbers: cat => cats; boy => boys; etc
- b. case (limited): I, me, my, mine; she, she, her, hers; etc
- c. tense (limited): past tense; present tense; perfect tense; etc
- d. mood (limited): imperative sentence; indicative sentence; etc

When it come some types of derivation which is a word formation process using affixes to create the new words. Derivational morphemes are more complicated because of too many of the affixes to mention them all. Here are the characteristics of derivational morpheme drawn by Siti Ristiana (1992):

a. The original meaning of a word is altered. For example, 'read' adds 're-' becoming 'reread' which is read again. Or a noun 'light' adds '-en' to a verb 'lighten', and this is changing from an entry to an action.

b. It is not influenced by the sentence outside a word. For instance, when 'friendly' adds 'un-' to become 'unfriendly', we still can say she is not friendly or she is unfriendly or even she is friendly, which are expressed by our thoughts and our meaning, but not because of the connection of the syntactic relation.

c. It always occurs by adding prefixes or suffixes, which is the easiest to understanding. Like mentioning before, un-friendly, light-en, re-read and so on are the new words created through the way of addition of the prefixes and suffixes.

d. It often appears between the stem and the inflectional affixes. Take 'assessments' as an example, '-s' is the inflectional suffix and the '-ment' is the derivational suffix. Two of these the suffixes adding to a word 'assess' to create a new word 'assessments'. However, they change the original meaning from verb to noun. Thus, it belongs to derivation.

Take the characteristics of inflectional morphemes and derivational morphemes into consideration, several characteristics of differences can be concluded, according to Lieber, Bauer and Plag (2013):

a. Inflection never changes the word classes by adding the grammatical meaning while derivation change the classes by adding lexical meanings to the word. Both of them can add the suffixes, but prefixes are to use as derivational morphemes that can change the word meanings.

E.g.

Light (noun) becomes lights (noun) by adding '-s' (inflectional suffix).

Light (noun) becomes lighten (verb) by adding '-en' (derivational suffix).

Large (adj.) becomes enlarge (verb) by adding 'en-' (derivational prefix).

b. Inflection is more formally and semantically regular, by contrast, derivation may not be.

E.g.

Lights (plural), eggs (plural), rulers (plural), pens (plural) and etc are the expression of '-s' of plural in inflection;

Ruler (device/person), reader (machine/person), lighter (tool/person) and others are the '-er' to explain more than the concept of 'person'.

c. Inflectional affixes go further to the root or base or stem than derivational affixes do. Just like 'kingdoms', '-s' will be added before '-dom' which is derivational affixes finishing the action. Therefore, derivational affixes are closer than the inflectional ones do.

d. Inflection is productive. On the other hand, derivation can be from unproductive to productive. The third person singular '-s' may be the best example to explain the production of the inflection because of different subjects need to be used it when the subject is singular. Then as for derivation, still take '-er' as an example, it can express special kind of person, device, tool, machine or anything else. In this case, it can create thousands of new words to present its productive but, on the contrary, it can not required by grammar in some special case like 'laugher' or 'amuser'.

3. Implication

In the last part, the definitions and characteristic of inflection and derivation are listed out, which can be made good use of while we are learning English, especially English words, as far as I am concerned.

3.1 Inflection Learning

As for inflection, some regular rules that are beneficial for learning English words are needed to master in different word classes, take verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns as example and present them respectively:

a. Inflection in nouns usually reflects in the singular and plural with adding the morpheme ‘-s’ and ‘-es, such as boy – boys, apple – apples, tomato – tomatoes, watch – watches, etc.

b. Inflection in verbs, in grammatical meaning, often represents the participle and the person with some of them changing in regular form while others are special cases came form Old English to remember:

Participle:

Person:

Verb	Past	Participle
play	played	played
attend	attended	attended
go	went	gone
eat	ate	eaten
First	Second	Third
I play	You/they play	He/she plays
I attend	You/they attend	He/she attends
I go	You/they go	He/she goes
I eat	You/they eat	He/she eats

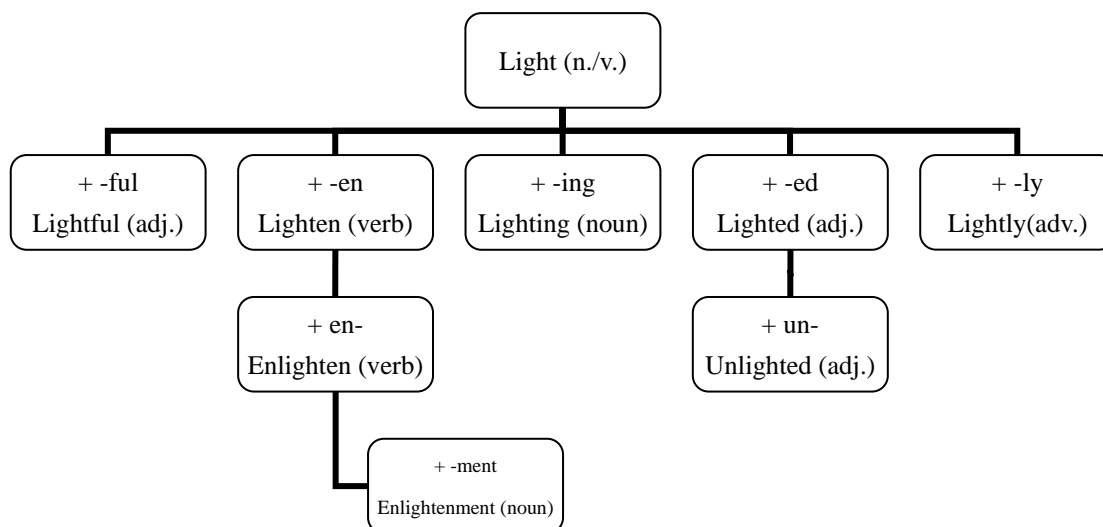
c. Inflection in adjectives and adverbs is frequently connected with the words’ comparative and superlative degree. For instance, small – smaller – smallest, few – fewer – fewest, large – larger – largest, delicately – more delicately – most delicately, and so on.

d. Inflection in pronouns is about the cases in the grammar like I – me – my – mine; we – our – us; he – him – his; she – her – hers; and so on.

3.2 Derivation Learning

Above are the some features of regular principles of inflection drawn to learn by the students as well as teach by the lecturer. However, it is not that formally regular for derivational words to learn or teach. Meanings, word classes, and even, sometime, the appearance of the words are changed after adding the derivational morphemes. For example, ‘hospital’ (noun) added ‘-ize’ (derivational morpheme) becomes ‘hospitalize’ (verb) which means admitting into hospital. Furthermore, ‘hospitalize’ (verb) changes to ‘hospitalization’ (noun) by adding ‘-ation’ (derivational morpheme), containing a totally different meaning from ‘hospital’, which means hospitalization insurance in America.

Although this is one of the difficult points of learning derivational words, Jaisser (1982) pointed out that there are various meaning within different morphemes. Thus, making good use of that meanings may offers a greater imaginary way to remember the words with graph like tree diagram. Take a word ‘light’ which the meaning is common for all of us as an example:



As we can see from the diagram,

a. 'light' is added several derivational suffixes '-ful' (full of), '-en' (enable), '-ing', '-ed', '-ly' and develop to the new words 'lightful' (full of light), 'lighten' (enable to light), 'lighting' (flash), 'lighted' (adjective), 'lightly' (adverb) with new meanings, which let them divided into the new words classes.

b. On the basis of the last step, two out of five words can continue to add derivational prefixes to create two new words like 'enlighten' (add 'en-') and 'unlighted' (add 'un-' which means no/unable). At this stage, there are seven new words which are relative to the original word to remember, though they are not the same meanings.

c. Continuously, adding derivational suffix '-ment' which is the form of noun to the word 'enlighten' to create a new noun 'enlightenment'.

Moreover, if there are more words relative to the last step, it can also list out numbers of it to remember. In this way, through drawing the tree diagram and combining the derivational affixes to remember the words during the period learning English, it is beneficial for learners as well as teachers.

Although there are clear features and distinctions about inflection and derivation, there still have several problem cases that will confuse the learner and made them feel difficult (Lieber, Bauer and Plag, 2013). In the beginning, some plural forms are not clear which one they should belong to. Apart some regular plural form by adding signal '-s' or '-es', they belong to inflectional words. However, how about those irregular plural forms like children (child), feet (foot), sheep (sheep), mouse (mice) and so on? They are ambiguous for the learners to divide. Then, as for the ordinal '-th', it is usually regarded as derivation. But the ordinal oneth, twoth was replaced by first, second, which is more like with inflectional morpheme '-th'. The last but not least, the participles, with ending markings '-ed' or '-ing', as the same as the adjectives, can make confusion to the learners. In fact, which one the words belong to is needed to look in the content, and this is not an easy job for the learners. Briefly, both of inflection and derivation are difficult for the learners as well as teachers.

4. Conclusion

Drawing a conclusion on the base of the above, the definitions and the differences of inflection and derivation are clearly expressed, which the former is referred to tense, gender, case, numbers, person and so on, reflecting the grammatical function of a word without changing their word class, while the derivation, which is more complicated and difficult than the inflection, involves something about the word meanings, often adding affixes to create new words and also changing the word class. Therefore, realizing the major features and take advantage of the differences is beneficial for not only the learners but also the teachers to have another new way to get good command of English, especially words like work family and word formations. Which means, inflectional morphemes and the grammar learning are put together to have a clear organization. At the same time, the features of derivational morphemes inspire me that tree graph or some other similar way can be used to broaden and remember the vocabulary with a kind of visual way.

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