

**CLASSIFICATION OF AFFIXES ACCORDING TO VARIOUS
CRITERIA**

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Annotation: *The topic “Classification of Affixes According to Various Criteria” explores the systematic categorization of affixes—morphemic units attached to roots or stems—in English. It focuses on different classification principles such as position in word structure (prefixes, suffixes, infixes, circumfixes), function in part-of-speech transformation (e.g., nominal, verbal, adjectival affixes), origin (native vs borrowed), semantic contribution (e.g., negation, intensity, repetition), and usage (productive vs non-productive). Understanding these classifications is essential for studying word formation, enriching vocabulary, and analyzing morphological processes in English linguistics.*

Key Words: *Affixation, prefixes, suffixes, infixes, circumfixes, word formation, morphology, part of speech, derivation, inflection, native affixes, borrowed affixes, semantic function, productivity, linguistic classification, English morphology. Affixes are morphemes added to a base or root word to alter its meaning or grammatical function. They play a crucial role in word formation and linguistic analysis. Affixes can be classified according to several criteria, including their position in the word structure, part-of-speech influence, origin, semantic contribution, and usage. Each of these dimensions reveals different aspects of how affixes function within a language, particularly in English, which borrows extensively from other languages and has a highly flexible morphological system.*



1. Classification by Position in Word Structure

The most basic classification of affixes concerns their position relative to the root word:

a. Prefixes

Prefixes are placed before the root and typically modify the meaning of the base word without changing its grammatical category.

- Examples: un- (unhappy), pre- (preheat), dis- (disagree)

b. Suffixes

Suffixes appear after the root and may either change the grammatical category or add specific meaning.

- Examples: -ness (kindness), -ly (quickly), -able (readable)

c. Infixes
Infixes are inserted within a root word. While rare in English, they appear in some expressive forms (e.g., fan-bloody-tastic) and are common in other languages (e.g., Tagalog).

d. Circumfixes
Circumfixes surround the root word (prefix + suffix simultaneously). English does not typically use circumfixes, but they are common in languages like German.

2. Classification by Grammatical Function (Part-of-Speech Shift)

Affixes are also classified by the grammatical or part-of-speech changes they introduce:

a. Derivational Affixes

These create new words by changing the meaning or the grammatical category.

- Noun to adjective: child → childish
- Verb to noun: perform → performance
- Adjective to adverb: happy → happily

Derivational affixes can be class-maintaining (e.g., re- in rebuild) or class-changing (e.g., -ness in darkness).

b. Inflectional Affixes

These do not create new words but express grammatical relations such as tense, number, or possession.

- Examples: -s (dogs), -ed (walked), -ing (running), -'s (John's)



English has only eight inflectional affixes, all suffixes.

3. Classification by Origin

Affixes in English come from various linguistic sources:

a. Native Affixes

These are of Old English or Germanic origin.

- Examples: -ful, -less, -ness, -ly

b. Borrowed Affixes

Many are derived from Latin and Greek, especially in scientific and technical vocabulary.

- Latin: -tion, -able, inter-
- Greek: -ology, -phobia, hyperBorrowed affixes often form learned compounds, which are especially common in academic and scientific discourse.

4. Classification by Semantic Contribution (Meaning)

Affixes can be grouped based on the type of meaning they add to the base word:

a. Negative/Privative

- Prefixes like un-, in-, dis- (unhappy, incorrect, disapprove)

b. Pejorative or Diminutive

- Suffixes like -ling (duckling), -ette (kitchenette)

c. Intensifying or Augmentative

- Prefixes like super-, ultra-, over- (superhuman, overdo)

d. Reversal or Removal

- un-, de- (untie, defrost)

Affixes contribute predictable semantic components, aiding in vocabulary expansion and comprehension.

5. Classification by Usage and Productivity

Another critical distinction is based on how frequently and flexibly affixes are used:

a. Productive Affixes

These are currently active in forming new words.



- Examples: -ness, -er, un-, re-
- Neologisms: googlable, reboot, Instagrammer

b. Unproductive (or Semi-productive) Affixes

These no longer actively form new words, but remain in existing vocabulary.

- Examples: -th (warmth), -en (widen), -dom (kingdom)

c. Bound vs. Free Morphemes

Affixes are always bound morphemes, meaning they cannot stand alone, unlike free morphemes (like root words such as book or run).

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