PROFESORES DE ENSEÑANZA SECUNDARIA · INGLÉS · JUNTA DE EXTREMADURA

TEMA

10

Topic 10: Lexis. Characteristics of Word Formation in English. Prefixation, Suffixation and Compounding

Léxico. Características de la formación de palabras en inglés. Prefijación, sufijación y composición.

§

NOVIEMBRE DE 2026

Material de elaboración propia a partir de las fuentes oficiales que se citan al final del tema. No es un temario oficial ni sustituye a la normativa publicada.

Índice

1. INTRODUCTION

2. BASIC CONCEPTS AND GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WORD FORMATION IN ENGLISH

- 2.1. Key terms
- 2.2. General characteristics of English word formation

3. PREFIXATION

- 3.1. Definition and general properties
- 3.2. Semantic classification
- 3.3. Origin, productivity and spelling

4. SUFFIXATION

- 4.1. Definition and general properties
- 4.2. Classification by the word class formed
- 4.3. Phonological and orthographic effects of suffixation

5. COMPOUNDING

- 5.1. Definition and structure
- 5.2. Compound nouns
- 5.3. Compound adjectives and verbs
- 5.4. Stress and the compound/phrase distinction
- 5.5. Neoclassical compounds

6. OTHER PROCESSES OF WORD FORMATION

7. A CONTRASTIVE VIEW: ENGLISH AND SPANISH

8. PEDAGOGICAL AND DIDACTIC IMPLICATIONS

9. CONCLUSION

Fuentes

1. INTRODUCTION

In Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass (1871), Alice asks Humpty Dumpty to explain the strange words of the poem "Jabberwocky", and he replies that slithy is "like a portmanteau — there are two meanings packed up into one word". The scene is a joke, but it contains the central idea of this topic: words are not indivisible blocks. They are built, and the speaker who knows how they are built can understand, and even invent, words he has never heard before.

This topic deals with lexis, that is, the vocabulary of English, and with the mechanisms by which that vocabulary grows from within. I will first define the basic concepts of morphology (word, lexeme, morpheme, base, root and affix) and describe the general characteristics of word formation in English. Secondly, I will examine prefixation, then suffixation, and thirdly compounding. Fourthly, I will deal briefly with the other processes that complete the picture: conversion, back-formation, clipping, blending and acronyms. Fifthly, I will compare English with Spanish, since our pupils' mother tongue explains many of their difficulties. Finally, I will consider the pedagogical and didactic implications of this content in Secondary Education and Bachillerato.

Before moving on, I would like to mention the sources consulted. For this topic I have used Laurie Bauer's English Word-Formation (Cambridge University Press, 1983), Ingo Plag's Word-Formation in English (Cambridge University Press, second edition, 2018), Randolph Quirk, Sidney Greenbaum, Geoffrey Leech and Jan Svartvik's A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (Longman, 1985) and Rodney Huddleston and Geoffrey Pullum's The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language (Cambridge University Press, 2002). I have also consulted general reference works such as Encyclopaedia Britannica and Merriam-Webster, the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (2001) and its Companion Volume (2020), and the curricular framework: Ley Orgánica 3/2020 (LOMLOE), which modifies Ley Orgánica 2/2006; Real Decreto 217/2022 for ESO and Real Decreto 243/2022 for Bachillerato; and, in Extremadura, Decreto 110/2022 for ESO and Decreto 109/2022 for Bachillerato, both of 22 August, modified by Decrees 242/2023 and 243/2023 of 12 September.