A brief history of the study of word-formation. Some basic concepts.

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Abstract. This paper is mainly an introduction to some of the terminology required in the study of word-formation. Much of the terminology used will help place word-formation in its broader framework. The study of word-formation is expanding and researchers seem to be showing a greater willingness to blend various theoretical viewpoints when dealing with it: to blend synchrony and diachrony, morphology and phonology, syntax and semantics.

Key-words: affixes, roots, stems, word-formation, words.

Interest in word-formation has probably always gone hand-in-hand with interest in language in general, and there are scattered comments and works on the subject of word-formation from the time of Panini, who provided a detailed description of Sanskrit word-formation, right up to the present day. Questions that are still providing difficulties today were asked by scholars in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Brekle, 1977; Brekle & Kastovsky, 1977), and in many ways present-day knowledge shows little advance on Panini's.

Part of the reason for this is that studies in word-formation did not get the boost that linguistics as a whole received in the early years of the twentieth century. As Adams (1973) points out, this is because the distinction between synchrony and diachrony drawn by Saussure, which has had a profound effect on linguistic studies since 1916, effectively precluded the study of word-formation, where synchrony and diachrony are most fruitfully considered together. Thus, although some scholars like Jespersen (1942) managed to merge synchronic and diachronic approaches in their study word-formation, most linguists considered word-formation either from a totally synchronic point of view (Bloomfield, 1935) or from a totally diachronic point of view (Koziol, 1937) Simplistically speaking, this was the situation in which word-formation research found itself when linguistics was hit by the "Chomskyan revolution" in 1957. The publication of Syntactic Structures (Chomsky, 1957) radically changed the approach to language taken by the majority of the most influential linguists. Whereas phonology and morphology had been the main concerns of American structuralism in the 1940s and 1950s, Syntactic Structures took as fundamental the centrality of syntax. American structuralism had not been interested in word-formation because its major interest had been in units smaller than the word (as is pointed out by Adams, 1973), and the word had not been given theoretical prominence in structuralist theory; Transformational Generative Grammar was not interested in word-formation because its major interest was in units larger than the word: the structure of phrases and sentences. Sentences were assumed to be made up not of words, but of morphemes (here Transformational Generative Grammar shows clearly its American structuralist background). Words as such played no real role. And even when Lees (1960), working within a Transformational Generative Grammar framework, looked at the generation of words by word-formation, he treated the words he generated not as a separate type of unit, but as a special kind of embedded sentence. This approach is standard in the majority of transformational studies, and very few such studies looked at other problems in word-formation. One exception is Zimmer (1964), who does consider some of the problems that are specific to word-formation.

The other aspect of language that Transformational Generative Grammar paid particular attention to, especially from about 1962 onwards, was phonology. The culmination of the early work on Generative Phonology is Chomsky & Halle's The Sound Pattern of English (1968). Based on an American tradition of morphophonemics, Generative Phonology is mainly concerned with specifying rules which generate all the surface shapes of a morpheme from a single underlying representation: rules are formulated to show, for example, that /naif/ and /naiv/ are both surface forms of the morpheme knife, the second form occurring in the plural, or that /divain/ and /divin/ are both surface forms of the morpheme divine, the second form occurring before -ity. This is the closest Transformational Generative Grammar really came to dealing with word-formation between 1957 and 1967.

The study of word-formation became important within the Transformational Generative paradigm with the publication of Chomsky (1970) (which had been available in the USA in manuscript since 1968). It was in this paper that the dichotomy between the "lexicalist" and the "transformationalist" approaches to lexical insertion was set up as one of the major divisions within the transformaţional school. This dispute brought the data of word-formation into the centre of linguistic interest, although no change was made in the basic assumption that the words formed were special kinds of sentences whose internal shape was determined by the phonology.

In more recent years, word-formation has been considered by various linguists from different points of view: from a phonological point of view (Halle, 1973; Lightner, 1975) from a syntactic point of view (Jackendoff, 1975; Roeper & Siegel,1978); and from a semantic point of view (Leech,1974;Lyons,1977).Whereas many of the linguists working in the field since the late 1950s have used the data provided by word-formation as a grindstone for their own particular theoretical axes, there now also seems to be a growing number of linguists who are interested first and foremost in how word-formation reflects language in general.

At the moment, the study of word-formation is in a state of flux. There is no one body of accepted doctrine on the subject, so that researchers are largely having to make up their own theory and procedures as they go along. Theoreticians in the field are in a difficult position because many of the descriptive studies of word-formation available avoid reference to such vital theoretical points as productivity. The study of word-formation is expanding, and researchers seem to be showing a greater willingness to blend various theoretical viewpoints when dealing with it: to blend synchrony and diachrony, morphology and phonology, syntax and semantics.

Any discussion of word-formation makes two assumptions: that there are such things as words, and that at least some of them are formed.

The definition of the word has been, for a long time , a major problem for linguistic theory because, however the term word is defined, there are some items in some languages which speakers of those languages call 'words' but which are not covered by the definition.

Despite the difficulties in providing a definition of a 'word', there are good reasons for operating with such a notion. The first of these is that speakers of a language, even illiterate speakers, have a feeling for what is, or is not, a word.

Sapir (1921) reports that speakers of languages that have never been written find no difficulty in repeating a sentence "word for word", for example, while they do have difficulty if asked to divide the 'word' into smaller units.

Leon Leviţki (Lb. engl. contemporană, Bucureşti, 1970) points out that the basic linguistic unit with which lexicology operates is the word — "an element of human speech, to which a meaning is attached, which is apt to be used grammatically, and which can be understood by a human collectivity constituted in a historical community˙.

Each word has its phonetics (phonation), its meaning or meanings, its grammatical form or forms, as well as its stylistic value or values: therefore although the linguistic unit is specifically a lexical category, it may be defined from several points of view, each of them corresponding to the main branches of linguistics."

Phonetically*,* a word is expressed by one or more phonemes (a phoneme is the minimal unit of distinctive sound-feature), e.g. in the word *a*, the phoneme is [ə], in the word glitter, the phonemes are ['glitə].

Lexically (or semantically), a word is expressed by one or more semantemes (a semanteme is the ultimate element or unit of meaning), e.g. the word house is expressed by one semanteme (the notion of 'house'); the word classroom is made up of two semantemes ('class' and 'room').

Grammatically*,* a word is expressed by one or more morphemes (a morpheme is the minimal grammatically significant unit), e.g. in the word house there is only one morpheme, which, in a context, will be used either as a noun, a verb, or an adjective: in houses there are two morphemes*:* house + s (s being the ending characteristic either of the plural noun house, or of the third person singular present tense of the verb to house).

At once lexically and grammatically, the structure of a word may be analysed in connection with such categories as roots, stems*,* and affixes (prefixes and suffixes).

The root is the ultimate constituent element common to all cognate words (or "association-groups" — „familii de cuvinte"), i.e. that element of a word which remains after the removal of all endings, formatives, etc.

The root of the word boundlessness is bound *(*boundary, bounded, bounds, boundless). The stem is a word (or one of its forms) which serves as a kernel of a new word, e.g. in boundlessness, the stem is boundless*;* in boundless, the stem (and the root) is bound. Affixes are lexical-grammatical elements placed either at the beginning of a word (prefixes) or at the end of it (suffixes).

Roots, stems and affixes belong both to lexicology and grammar (morphology): to lexicology, because they are elements making up a word and leading it a certain meaning: to grammar, because (very frequently at least) they involve morphological changes (e.g. bound is a noun, boundless is an adjective, boundlessness — a noun).

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