

Table 7.6 Building Words with Greek Spatial Prefixes

Root	pher-phor	the	leg-log	tom-tm	bol-bl	sta-ste
<b>Prefixes</b>						
ana-	x	x	x	x	x	x
anti-		x				
apo-			x			x
cata-	x		x		x	x
dia-	x	x	x	x	x	x
ec-			x			x
en-				x	x	
epi-	x	x	x	x	x	x
hyper-					x	x
hypo-		x				
meso-			x			
meta-	x	x			x	x
para-			x		x	
peri-	x				x	
pro-		x	x		x	x
pros-		x				
syn-		x	x		x	

tom-tm 'cut', bol-bl 'throw', sta 'stand', 'state'. Here are some words combining Greek spatial prefixes with these roots:

*anaphoric* (grammatical term) 'referring to a preceding word or phrase' (lit. 'carrying back')

*analogy* 'similarity of properties, ratios, etc.' (lit. '(the act of) studying back')

*anathema* 'something banned or cursed' (lit. 'thing put back')

Others include *diathesis*, *epitome*, *epilog*, *anabolic*, *prosthetic*, and *synthesis*.

Choose five interesting or unfamiliar combinations from this list that form words whose meaning has shifted from the literal reading of their glosses. Using an etymological dictionary like the *Oxford English Dictionary*, investigate the range of meanings the words have had over time, and identify the semantic shifts involved. For example, look for words combining *hypo-* and *sta* or *syn-* and *log*. Determine their principal meanings at various times and identify the semantic shifts they have undergone. Don't forget that allomorphy, especially partial or total assimilation, may disguise some morphemes in certain combinations.

3. The following is a pair of cognate morphemes in which both the formal resemblance and the relation of meaning is problematic, at least without some special knowledge: *graph* 'write' as in *calligraphy* and *crab* as in *fidler crab*. Should *graph* and *crab* be considered allomorphs of the same morpheme if we can state a rule of allomorphy which relates the <g> and <ph> of *graph* and the <c> and <b> of *crab*? Where would you draw the line, and why?

4. Which of the two meanings given for each of the words below is earlier? What knowledge about semantic shift or other factors leads you to this conclusion? (Use an etymological dictionary like the *Oxford English Dictionary* to check your answer.)

- text* 'weave' as in *textile* or *text* 'writing' as in *textual*
- ex-* as in *expose*, *extend* or *ex-* as in *ex-wife*, *ex-doctor*
- divine* 'godly' or *divine* 'wonderful'

5. Following the example of *insist* from the last section of this chapter, detail the major developments along the paths (such as metaphor or metonymy) and outcomes (such as narrowing or widening) of semantic shift involved in the history of the word *inaugurate* from its beginnings in ancient Rome to the present. Be sure to propose a plausible path for every step you can.

'take omens from the flight of birds' >

'consecrate by taking omens from the flight of birds' >

'consecrate an installation into office by taking omens from the flight of birds' >

'install in office'

6. Each of the following words has undergone either a metaphoric or metonymic shift in meaning. Identify the type of shift from the earlier meaning (on the left of the arrow) to the current meaning that you feel is most plausible. You may use a dictionary as an aid if you like. Explain your answer in a sentence or two. Some meaning shifts cannot be confirmed by the historical record or cannot be neatly classified as metaphor or metonymy. If you believe that there is more than one plausible answer in a particular case, give and explain both.

a. *vermicelli* 'small or thin worms' > 'a kind of thin macaroni not unlike spaghetti'

b. *red eye* (2 words) 'an eye that is red' > 'a minnow that has red eyes'

c. *seminary* 'a place where seeds are sprouted and nurtured' > 'school of religion'

*(resemblance)*  
metaphor: look like  
~~metonymy: resemblance~~  
metonymy: not because of resemblance but because of some other connections

metaphor

metonymy  
metaphor

- d. *convince* 'to physically overcome' > 'to intellectually persuade' *metaphor*  
 e. *urbane* 'pertaining to cities; urban' > 'sophisticated' *metonymy*  
 f. *muscle* 'a little mouse' > 'an organ such as the biceps' *metaphor*  
 g. *sandwich* (capitalized) 'earl said to have dined on finger food rather than leave the gambling table' > 'food consisting of two slices of bread and a filling' *metonymy*

7. Political discussion has introduced a number of changes into our vocabulary. Nowadays the estate tax is often referred to as a death tax; antiabortion people refer to their position as pro-life, and so on. How do such examples compare to the types of change discussed in this chapter?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Usage and Variation

#### Many Englishes

Up to now, we have been considering English to be a language. That seems eminently reasonable, yet in a sense it is inaccurate. What goes by the single name *English* is not a single language. Instead, it is a large set of varieties from different parts of the globe, used in a wide assortment of social situations.

Earlier chapters have mentioned variation in style. Some usages are more appropriate for formal contexts than for informal ones, while usages out of place in formal contexts may be perfectly fine in informal ones. Still, this doesn't begin to capture the range and complexity of variation actually observed in speech. Doctors, farmers, social workers, bakers, biologists, carpenters, philosophers, exterminators, psychologists, actors, educators, lawyers, gardeners, and physicists all either work with a set of special terms or use more general terms in special ways. A major goal of this book is to provide access to such specialized vocabularies and, in particular, to the words associated with more formal and scholarly styles.

At the same time, we need to consider whether formal styles deserve a privileged status over other styles. Recent innovations in our language come from many places on the social and professional spectrum. Consider the diversity of the origins of the words *latte*, *regifting*, *infotainment*, and *bling*. Clearly, English speakers are looking not just to one source for models to follow in their speech. We have already seen that our rich and varied linguistic past includes constant changes to suit new conditions. Obviously, this is still going on. The users responsible for this constant reshaping include the most and least educated speakers, from communities all over the country and the world.