

Word Formation

HTWD
Sprachenzentrum

Knowledge of word formation helps...

- ☐ to read specific texts more effectively
- ☐ to identify parts of speech
- ☐ to guess the meaning of unknown words
- ☐ to record vocabulary clearly
- ☐ to memorise and use new words correctly

English

- ❑ Rich in vocabulary (ca. 500,000 words)
- ❑ Several sources (Anglo-Saxon, Latin, French, Greek).
- ❑ Large number of synonyms and homonyms

Synonyms

- Different words describing the same phenomenon
- "...Subtle shades of meaning at different levels of style." (McCarthy / O'Dell, 1994)
 - e.g. for *königlich*, we find
 - ✕ **royal** (French),
 - ✕ **kingly** (Anglo-Saxon),
 - ✕ **regal** (Latin)

Homonyms/ Polysemous words

□ Same words, but different in meaning or origin

■ e.g. to **deliver**

□ Possible German translations -
depending on context and/or jargon:

⊠ (*Waren*) *liefern*

⊠ (*ein Kind*) *entbinden*

⊠ (*von Bösem*) *erlösen*

⊠ (*Protonen*) *abgeben*

⊠ (*Rohöl*) *fördern*

Word classes / Parts of speech

- ☐ **Verbs / Gerunds**
- ☐ **Adjectives**
- ☐ **Adverbs**
- ☐ **Prepositions**
- ☐ **Nouns**
- ☐ **Pronouns**
- ☐ **Articles**
- ☐ **Conjunction**
 - ☐ *A good student works hard at her books, and she enjoys learning.*

Syllables

- Syllables form words
 - e.g. good (1 syllable), en-joy (2 syllables)
- Each word has a root or core syllable/s
- Root is the same for all members of **word family**
 - e.g. **joy**, **joy**ous, en**joy**, en**joy**able, en**joy**ment

Affixation

- Beside the root, there are
 - Suffixes (Nachsilben)
 - Prefixes (Vorsilben)

Prefixes

- Change meaning of word
 - e.g. **anti**biotic, **ex**-president
- Can change word class
 - e.g. joy (noun), **en**joy (verb)

Suffixes

- Change meaning of word
 - e.g. friend**ship**
- Often change word class
 - e.g. worker**er**

Zero affixation

- With no change in form, many words function as noun and verb or noun and adjective
 - e.g. Give me a **smile**. - Why don't you **smile**?
 - e.g. I don't like the **cold**. - I don't like **cold** weather.

Source:

English Vocabulary in Use,
Upper-intermediate & advanced
(M. McCarthy, F. O'Dell),
Cambridge University Press, 1994,
Units 1-4, 8-10