

# 03 — Morphology and word-formation

*Lexicology and Lexicography* — **Course Website**

**Dr. Quirin Würschinger, LMU Munich**

November 4, 2025

# Outline

1. **Lexical innovation**: How do new words arise and what are the key types?
2. **Morphology vs word-formation**: What's the distinction and scope?
3. **Inflection in Present-Day English**: What inflectional morphemes exist?
4. **Morphological building blocks**: What are morphemes and their categories?
5. **Morphemic processes**: How do derivation and compounding work?
6. **Non-morphemic processes**: What are conversion, clipping, blending, back-formation, and acronyms?
7. **Practice**: How can we analyse word structure?
8. **Studying word-formation empirically**: How can we use the OED to study neologisms?

# Theory

# Lexical innovation

How do new words arise?

# Lexical innovation

How do new words arise?

Kerremans (2015)

		meaning	
		old	new
form	old	x	<i>subprime</i>
	new	<i>snowicane</i>	<i>detweet</i>

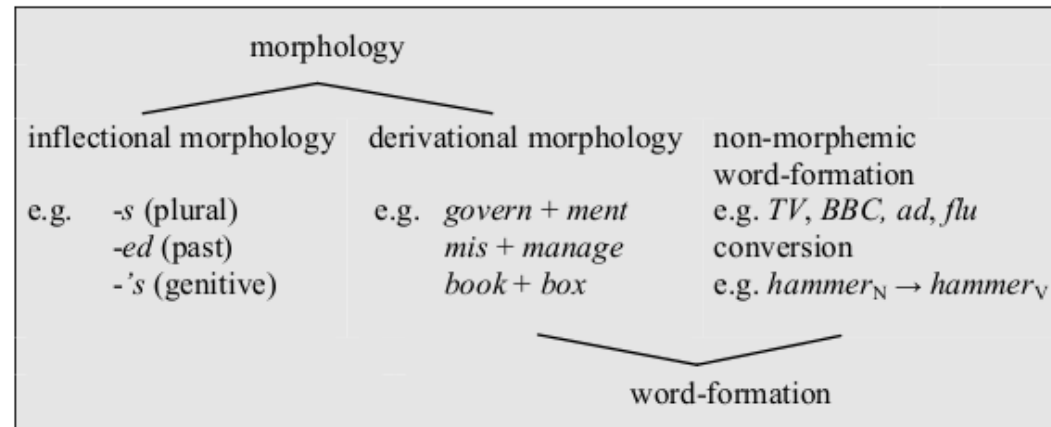
# Morphology vs word-formation

What is the difference between morphology and word-formation?

# Morphology vs word-formation

What is the difference between morphology and word-formation?

Schmid (2016)



# Inflection in Present-Day English

Which inflectional morphemes exist in Present-Day English?

# Inflection in Present-Day English

Which inflectional morphemes exist in Present-Day English?

Schmid (2016)

word class	morpheme	functions/meanings
noun	{plural}	marking of plural
	{genitive}	marking of genitive; possession, part-of etc.
verb	{3 <sup>rd</sup> person}	3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular present
	{ing}	present participle
	{ed <sub>1</sub> }	simple past
	{ed <sub>2</sub> }	past participle
adjective	{er}	comparative
	{est}	superlative
numerals	{th}	ordinal number

# Morphological building blocks

Which types of morphemes are there and how do they differ?

# Morphological building blocks

Which types of morphemes are there and how do they differ?

Schmid (2016)

morpheme class	attributes	examples
lexically free (lexemes, roots)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>semantically autonomous</li> <li>open class</li> <li>inflecting (except for interjections)</li> </ul>	N: {head}, {key}, {part} Adj: {green}, {pale}, {nice} Adv: {fast}, {well}, {here} V lex: {plan}, {teach}, {pass} Interj: {ouch}, {damn}
grammatically free (lexemes, function words)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>not autonomous, relational</li> <li>closed class</li> <li>not inflecting</li> </ul>	V aux: {will}, {must}, {have} Pron: {she}, {which}, {why} Prep: {of}, {in}, {at} Conj: {and}, {that}, {as} Num: {one}, {thousand}
lexically bound (derivational affixes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(more or less) open class</li> <li>create lexemes with discrete meaning</li> <li>usually change word class (suffixes)</li> <li>closer to the stem</li> </ul>	prefixes: {re-}, {dis-}, {post-} suffixes: {-er}, {-ify}, {-ment}
grammatically bound (inflectional suffixes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>closed class</li> <li>create word-forms with unchanged meaning</li> <li>always maintain word class</li> <li>further away from the stem</li> </ul>	for Ns: {plural}, {genitive} for Vs: {3 <sup>rd</sup> pers. pres. sg.}, {ing}, {ed <sub>1</sub> }, {ed <sub>2</sub> } for Adjs: {er}, {est} for Nums: {th}

# Morphemic word-formation processes

# Non-morphemic word-formation

## *Overview*

## *Zero-derivation / conversion vs derivation*

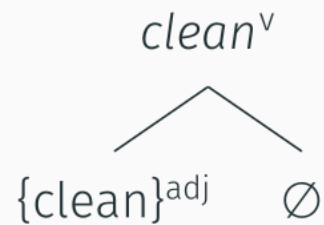
What is the difference between zero-derivation and conversion?

## Zero-derivation / conversion vs derivation

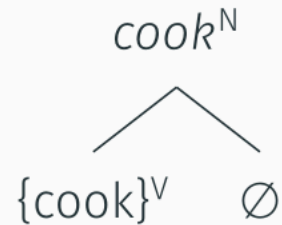
What is the difference between zero-derivation and conversion?

**Definition:** Creation of a new lexeme by changing the word class of an existing word without the addition of an overtly marked suffix.

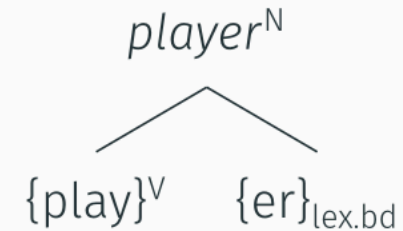
Zero-derivation: Adj > V



Zero-derivation: V > N



cf. derivation:



## Compounding vs blending

### Formal properties of blends

*swooshtika* – derogatory reference to Nike logo

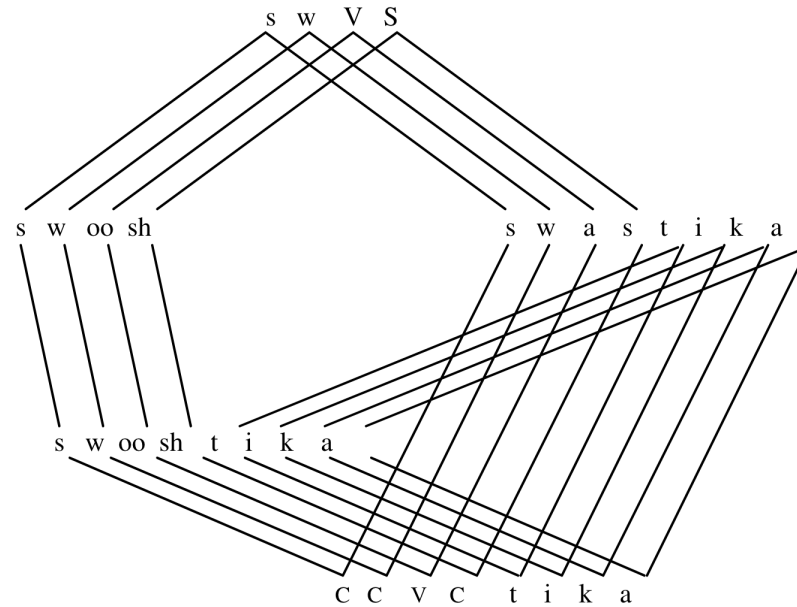


Figure 1. Phonological Relations in an English Blend

Kemmer (2003)

## Semantic properties of blends

*glitterati*

# Quiz: classify word-formation processes

*Interactive version*

Max challenge attempts exceeded. Please refresh the page to try again!

# Morphemic vs non-morphemic WF – summary

	morphemic	non-morphemic	examples
building blocks	morphemes	parts of words	<i>br + unch</i>
combination	adding morphemes	removing parts	<del><i>in</i></del> <i>flu</i> <del><i>enza</i></del>
serialization	concatenative	interspersed	<i>CHuckLE x snORT</i>
regularity	clear rules, predictable patterns	heterogeneous, high variability	<i>Brangelina</i>
cognitive processing	largely unconscious	conscious coining	<i>BBC</i>

# Further reading

- Bauer, Laurie. 2022. *An Introduction to English Lexicology*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Lipka, Leonhard. 2002. *English Lexicology: Lexical Structure, Word Semantics and Word-Formation*. Tübingen: Narr.
- Schmid, Hans-Jörg. 2016. *English Morphology and Word-Formation - an Introduction*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.

Studying word-formation  
based on empirical data using  
the OED

# Research questions

1. Which neologisms have entered the OED since 2000?
2. What are the most common word classes among these recent neologisms?
3. What are the most common word-formation processes?
4. Which semantic domains are most common?
5. Since when have these neologisms been in use?

# Extracting neologisms from the OED

Using OED's Advanced Search functionality, we can extract neologisms – words that have only been used since the year 2000 – from the OED.

The screenshot displays the OED's Advanced Search interface. The top navigation bar includes the OED logo, a search bar with a dropdown menu set to 'Dictionary', and links for 'Advanced search', 'AI Search Assistant', and user account options. Below the navigation bar, a dark blue bar shows the search results breakdown: 'Entries (710)', 'Meanings (1,164)', 'Quotations (0)', and 'Historical Thesaurus (681)'. The 'Entries (710)' tab is selected and highlighted with a pink underline.

The main search area is divided into two columns. The left column contains search filters. Under 'SEARCH TERMS', there is a text input field and several radio button options: 'Headword' (selected), 'Definition', 'Etymology', 'Forms', 'Quotation text', 'Quotation author', 'Quotation work', and 'Exact match' (checkbox). Below these are 'Add term' and 'Update' buttons. Under 'DATE OF USE', there are radio button options for 'Use' and 'First use' (selected), and two input fields for 'From' (set to '2000') and 'To' (set to 'Year (YYYY)').

The right column displays the search results. It shows '1 to 50 of 710 results' and a 'Save search' button. A pagination bar indicates '1 2 Next >>'. A 'Sort by' dropdown menu is set to 'Frequency', and a link for 'Export results (.csv)' is visible. The results are listed in a table with four entries:

Year Range	Word	Definition
2020-	<b>Covid-19, n.</b>	An acute disease in humans caused by a...
2020-	<b>Covid, n.<sup>2</sup></b>	The disease Covid-19; (also) the coronavirus...
2008-	<b>Bitcoin, n.</b>	A type of digital currency introduced in 2009...
2002-	<b>selfie, n.</b>	A photograph that one has taken of oneself, esp...

Search URL

# Analyzing the data in Microsoft Excel

model Excel sheet: [URL](#)

## *Data preparation*

1. Open a blank Excel sheet.
2. Click **import** and **CSV file**.
3. Select file origin encoding to **Unicode (UTF-8)**.
4. Specify that the data are **delimited by commas** (**csv**) as column separator.
5. Convert the region containing the data to a **Table**.
6. Insert one **Pivot Table** (and **Pivot Chart**) for each research question.

# Table

first-use-from-2000 — Saved

Home Developer Insert Draw Page Layout Formulas Data Review View Automate Table

AutoSave

Paste

Aptos Narrow (Bod... 12 A A

B I U

General

Conditional Formatting

Format as Table

Cell Styles

Insert

Delete

Format

Editing

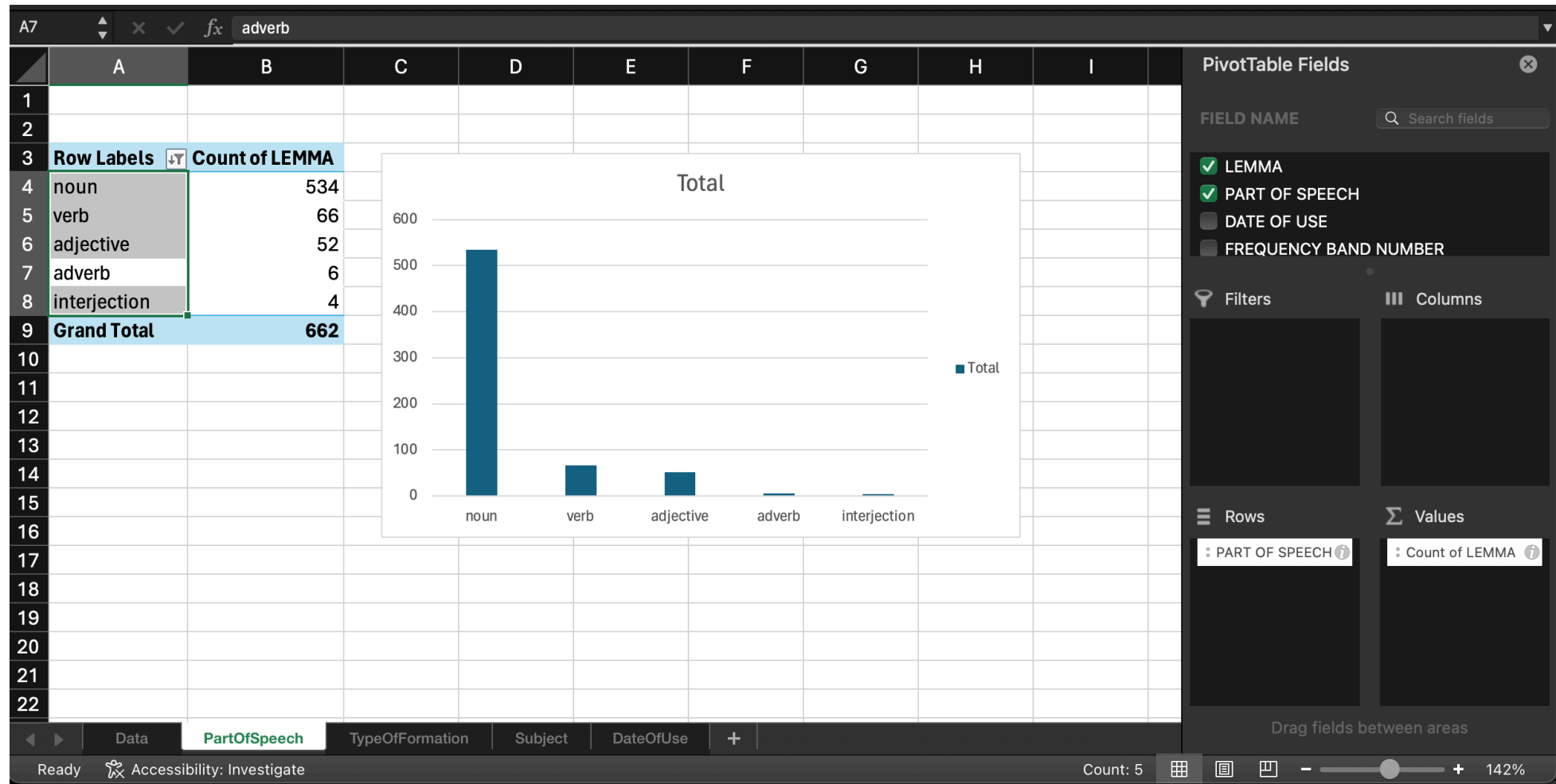
B8

noun

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	LEMMA	PART OF SPEECH	DATE OF USE	FREQUENCY	DEFINITION	TYPE OF FORMATION
2	CIO	noun	-2000	5	'Cry it out', a method of sleep training in which...	initialism
3	DDoS	noun	-2000	4	= distributed denial of service, n.; usually...	initialism
4	click and collect	adjective, noun	-2000	4	Of or relating to a shopping facility whereby a...	compound
5	CubeSat	noun	-2000	4	A small, lightweight space satellite that fits...	compound
6	stan	noun	-2000	4	slang (derogatory, except when self-deprecatory)...	proper name
7	Greatest Generation	noun	-2000	3	The generation of Americans reaching adulthood...	compound
8	Sudoku	noun	-2000	3	A type of logic puzzle, the object of which is to...	borrowing
9	blue state	noun, adjective	-2000	3	A state (projected to be) won by the Democratic...	compound
10	teleserye	noun	-2000	3	A television soap opera.	borrowing
11	downvote	noun	-2000	3	In the context of social media: an instance of...	conversion
12	butterfly ballot	noun	-2000	3	A machine-readable ballot paper having the names...	compound
13	video blog	noun	-2000	3	A blog primarily composed of video postings...	compound
14	WWJD	interjection	-2000	3	'What Would Jesus Do?'; used among some...	initialism
15	bling	verb	-2000	3	intransitive. To glitter with or like bling; to...	conversion
16	EESC	noun	-2000	3	European Economic and Social Committee; = ESC, n.	initialism
17	G2C	noun	-2000	3	Government to citizen (also consumer or...	initialism
18	geocaching	noun	-2000	3	An activity or pastime in which an item, or a...	compound
19	mobile health	noun	-2000	3	Health and medical services provided and accessed...	compound
20	nutrigenomics	noun	-2000	3	With singular agreement. A branch of genomics...	compound
21	speed dating	noun	-2000	3	A process by which people seeking romantic...	compound
22	Anthropocene	noun, adjective	-2000	3	Chiefly with the. The epoch of geological time...	compound
23	boba	noun	-2000	3	A cold drink of Taiwanese origin which typically...	borrowing
24	deep web	noun	-2000	3	The part of the World Wide Web that is not...	compound

Data PartOfSpeech TypeOfFormation Subject DateOfUse +

## Pivot Table



# References

Kemmer, Suzanne. 2003. "Schemas and Lexical Blends." In *Motivation in Language: Studies in Honor of Günther Radden*, edited by Günther Radden and Hubert Cuyckens, 69–97. J. Benjamins Pub. Co.

Kerremans, Daphné. 2015. *A Web of New Words*. Bern: Peter Lang. <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-04788-2>.

Schmid, Hans-Jörg. 2016. *English Morphology and Word-Formation - an Introduction*. 2nd ed. Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag.