

4.1 Derivational affixes and their functions

An **affix** is any morpheme except the root word. The ability to identify affixes makes learning a language more productive than memorisation of words' spelling letter by letter. Some language teachers suggest to “split a long word into parts” to aid reading. Identifying morphemes (rather than syllables) is the most logical way of splitting a word, which, indeed, is a great tool for mastering both reading and writing. Practising morphological analysis develops thinking skills, ensures good spelling, and helps to memorise long and complex words in both native and foreign languages. This method has the potential to assuage “mild dyslexic” problems that emerge from lack of generalisation skills.

The most common affixes in both English and Russian languages are a **prefix** (precedes a root word) and a **suffix** (follows a root word or another suffix). Many derivational suffixes and prefixes modify the semantics of a word. Thus, in the pairs of adjectives **complete – incomplete** and **hopeful – hopeless** the prefix **in-** and the suffix **-less** transform the lexemes into their antonyms.

The role of affixes in the Russian lexis is crucial as they create a countless variety of new words. In Example 7, all verbs share the same root **-каз-** that signifies an act of verbal communication and does not function in the Russian language without a prefix. The suffix and ending **-а-ть** are grammatical attributes of an infinitive, while the variable prefixes point to different types of verbal communication. Therefore, despite their morphological affinity, these words are far from synonymous.

Example 7

Russian verb infinitives with the root word -каз-	English translation
сказать	to say
рассказать	to tell
указать	to point out
приказать	to command
заказать	to book
пересказать	to retell
показать	to show, to demonstrate
подказать	to prompt
доказать	to prove
наказать	to punish

4.2. Differentiating loanwords and borrowed words

In this text, a full match with its version in the donor language is regarded as a **loanword**. Nouns with acquired or replaced gender and number endings are also referred to as loanwords. A **borrowed word** is a version partially transformed in the recipient language, usually using its suffixes. Prefixes do not typically serve as an instrument of such transformation.

Most “international” prefixes do not modify a part of speech (Example 8). In the further chapters, prefixes are included in word lists as long as their English and Russian versions match, e.g., **sub-** /**суб-** (submarine – субмарина); **pro-**/**про-** (protest – протест); **in-/ин-** (inflation – инфляция), and **com-/ком-** (composition – композиция). Example 8 illustrates derivatives with varied semantic prefixes in borrowed words.

Example 8

English			Russian		
Prefix	Root word	Noun	Prefix	Root word	Noun
ob-	-ject	object	объ-	-ект	объект
sub-	-ject	subject	субъ-	-ект	субъект
pro-	-ject	project	про-	-экт	проект
in-	-ject	inject(ion)	инъ	-екц-	инъекция

The function of Russian suffixes may be **morphological** as well as **semantic derivation**. A Russian derivational suffix typically follows a morpheme borrowed from a donor language increasing the length of a word. Example 9 illustrates use of suffixes in morphological derivation.

Example 9

English	Part of language	Russian
object	Noun	объект
objective	Adjective	объективный
objectively	Adverb	объективно
to objectify	Verb	объективировать

Therefore, only a noun can become a loanword without acquiring a Russian suffix. The mechanisms of forming Russian adjectives, adverbs and verbs from noun loanwords are described in detail in Part 4.

4.3. Nine ways of interlinguistic transition

An average English speaker will easily identify parts of speech in their language and differentiate the role of words in a sentence by certain derivational suffixes even without being aware of those morphemes. This process is subconscious and made successful thanks to the native speaker's experience, which is not the case in acquisition of a second language. Those lucky learners, who were specifically taught composition of English words, are able to build their Russian vocabulary quickly, because they are better equipped to recognise familiar words and morphemes in the unfamiliar language as well as grasp patterns of differences.

In truth, only some English words require a degree of modification to be used as Russian. Their transformation follows established patterns which do not necessarily reflect the words' etymology since most of the shared vocabulary originates from languages other than English. In Table 5, the patterns are summarised for learning purposes.

Table 5. Patterns of the modification of English words in the Russian language

{find in the book}

Translation of Russian morphemes often makes understanding the language a challenge. For this reason, learning derivational suffixes in borrowed words at the beginner stage puts their acquisition into a more logical perspective.

4.4. Borrowed suffixes

Migration of affixes is almost as common a phenomenon as the migration of root words. For example, Latin prefixes such as **anti-** and **ex-** exist in most European languages. Several suffixes from Western European languages circulate in the Russian lexis, for example, the Latin suffixes **-ist**, **-ism**, **-er**, **-or**, the French **-age** and, in the recent three decades, the English suffix **-ing**.

Fully integrated affixes begin to “act” as independent derivational morphemes in recipient languages. The suffixes **-ist**, **-ism** and **-er /-or** combined with Russian root words participate in developing new lexemes. For example, in the noun **связист** – **signalman**, the stem **связь** (**communication**) is original Russian, while the suffix **-ист** is borrowed. However, integration of a foreign affix is a lengthy process that may take decades and even centuries of acquisition and practising hundreds of foreign words before the affix becomes an independent derivational morpheme in the receiving language.

Regarding linguistic borrowing and grammatical adjustment in the Russian language, it is more important how words end rather than how they begin, i.e. the grammatical adaptation of borrowed vocabulary takes place as replacement or/and acquisition of suffixes and endings. Therefore, the rationale behind the grouping of further linguistic material is, firstly, by the patterns in suffixation, and then, in the alphabetic order within each pattern. The patterns of transformation of these affixes as they migrate from donor languages into Russian occur repeatedly in many words, to the extent that they begin to represent rules, by which words can be borrowed. The remainder of this book is essentially a large-scale demonstration of this point.