

Word Formation



Autocorrect I could do without. It thinks I am stupid and clumsy, and while it's true that I don't know how to disable it and I can't text with thumbs like a teenager (though I am prehensile), why would I let a machine tell me what I want to say? I text someone "Good night" in German, and instead of "Gute Nacht" I send "Cute Nachos." I type "adverbial," and it comes out "adrenal,"

which is like a knife to my adverbial gland. Invited to dinner, I text my friend to ask whether I can bring anything, and she replies that the “food and dissertation” are under control.

Norris ([2015](#))

The creation of new words in a language never stops and English is one language that is particularly fond of adding to its large vocabulary. Traditionally, we would check in a dictionary to be sure that we were using the right word, with correct spelling, but technological advances have provided us with programs that do the checking for us, or, even more insidiously, as in the situation described by Mary Norris, try to choose the words for us. Unfortunately, at the moment, these programs do not seem to have any way of knowing if the words that are chosen are appropriate or if it is quite normal to send someone a communication out of the blue that reads “cute nachos.” In this chapter, we won’t solve the problem of inappropriate choice of words, but we will look in some detail at how those words came to be part of the language.

Neologisms

Around 1900, in New Berlin, Ohio, a department-store worker named J. Murray Spangler invented a device that he called an *electric suction sweeper*. This device eventually became very popular and could have become known as a *spangler*. People could have been *spanglering* their floors or they might even have *spanglered* their rugs and curtains. The use could have extended to a type of person who droned on and on (and really sucked), described as *spanglerish*, or to a whole style of behavior called *spanglerism*. However, none of that happened. Instead, Mr. Spangler sold his new invention to a local businessman

called William H. Hoover, whose Hoover Suction Sweeper Company produced the first machine called a “Hoover.” Not only did the word *hoover* (without a capital letter) become as familiar as *vacuum cleaner* all over the world, but in Britain, people still talk about *hoovering* (and not *spanglering*) their carpets.

The point of this small tale is that, although we had never heard of Mr. Spangler before, we really had no difficulty coping with the new words: *spangler*, *spanglerish*, *spanglerism*, *spanglering* or *spanglered*. That is, we can very quickly understand a new word, a [neologism](#), and accept the use of different forms of that new word in the language. This ability must derive in part from the fact that there is a lot of regularity in the word-formation processes in a language. In this chapter, we will explore some of the basic processes by which new words are created.

Etymology

The study of the origin and history of a word is known as its [etymology](#), a term which, like many of our technical words, comes to us through Latin, but has its origins in Greek (*étymon* “original form” + *logia* “study of”), and is not to be confused with *entomology*, also from Greek (*éntomon* “insect”). Greek and Latin are the sources of many English words, often providing alternative ways to describe things, such as *mono-* from Greek (*mono-cycle*) and *uni-* from Latin (*uni-cycle*). The other major source, Germanic, provides an alternative form *one-* (*one-wheeled cycle*).

When we look closely at the etymologies of everyday words, we soon discover that there are many different ways in which new words can enter the language. We should keep in mind that a lot of words in daily use today were, at one time, considered barbaric misuses of the language. It is difficult now to understand the views expressed in the early nineteenth century over the

“tasteless innovation” of a word like *handbook*, or the horror expressed by a London newspaper in 1909 over the use of the newly coined word *aviation*. Yet many new words can cause similar outcries as they come into use today. Rather than act as if the language is being debased, we might prefer to view the constant evolution of new words and new uses of old words as a reassuring sign of vitality and creativeness in the way a language is shaped by the needs of its users.

Borrowing

One of the most common sources of new words in English is the process simply labeled **borrowing**, that is, the taking over of words from other languages. (Technically, it’s more than just borrowing, because English doesn’t give them back.) Throughout its history, the English language has adopted a vast number of words from other languages, including these examples:

<i>dope</i> (Dutch)	<i>piano</i> (Italian)	<i>tattoo</i> (Tahitian)
<i>jewel</i> (French)	<i>pretzel</i> (German)	<i>tycoon</i> (Japanese)
<i>glitzy</i> (Yiddish)	<i>ski</i> (Norwegian)	<i>yogurt</i> (Turkish)
<i>lilac</i> (Persian)	<i>sofa</i> (Arabic)	<i>zebra</i> (Bantu)

Sometimes a new sound comes along along with new words. The voiced fricative /ʒ/ became part of English through borrowed French words such as *measure* and *rouge*.

Other languages, of course, borrow terms from English, as in the Japanese use of *suupaa* or *suupaamaaketto* (“supermarket”) and *taipuraitaa* (“typewriter”). We can also hear of people in Finland using a *Šekki* (“check”) to

pay their bills, Hungarians talking about *sport*, *klub* and *futbal*, or the French discussing problems of *le stress*, over a glass of *le whisky*, during *le weekend*.

In Brazilian Portuguese, the English words *up* and *nerd* have been borrowed and turned into verbs for the new activities *upar* (“to upload”) and *nerdear* (“to surf the internet”). In some cases, the borrowed words are used with quite novel meanings, as in the contemporary German use of the English words *partner* and *look* in the phrase *im Partnerlook* to describe two people who are together and wearing similar clothing. Other German uses of English words are illustrated in Task F on page [66](#).

Loan-translation

A special type of borrowing is described as [loan-translation](#) or [calque](#) (/kælk/). In this process, there is a direct translation of the elements of a word into the borrowing language. Interesting examples are the French term *gratte-ciel*, which literally translates as “scrape-sky,” the Dutch *wolkenkrabber* (“cloud scratcher”) or the German *Wolkenkratzer* (“cloud scraper”), all of which were calques for the English *skyscraper*.

The English word *superman* is thought to be a loan-translation of the German *Übermensch*, and the term *loanword* itself is believed to have come from the German *Lehnwort*. The English expression *moment of truth* is believed to be a calque from the Spanish phrase *el momento de la verdad*, though not restricted to the original use as the final thrust of the sword to end a bullfight. Nowadays, some Spanish speakers eat *perros calientes* (literally “dogs hot”) or *hot dogs*, which have nothing to do with those four-legged *perros*. The American concept of “boyfriend” was borrowed, with sound change, into Japanese as *boyifurendo*, but as a calque into Chinese as “male friend” or *nan pengyu*.

Compounding

In some of the examples we have just considered, there is a joining of two separate words to produce a single form. Thus, *Lehn* and *Wort* are combined to produce *Lehnwort* in German. This combining process, technically known as **compounding**, is very common in languages such as German and English, but much less common in languages such as French and Spanish. Common English compounds are *bookcase*, *doorknob*, *fingerprint*, *sunburn*, *textbook*, *wallpaper*, *wastebasket* and *waterbed*. All these examples are nouns, but we can also create compound adjectives (*good-looking*, *low-paid*) and compounds of adjective (*fast*) plus noun (*food*) as in *a fast-food restaurant* or *a full-time job*.

This very productive source of new terms has been well documented in English and German, but can also be found in totally unrelated languages, such as Hmong (spoken in Laos and Vietnam), which has many recently created compounds. (More examples can be found in Task I, on page [68](#).)

<i>hwj</i> (“pot”)	+ <i>kais</i> (“spout”)		= <i>hwjkais</i> (“kettle”)
<i>paj</i> (“flower”)	+ <i>kws</i> (“corn”)		= <i>pajkws</i> (“popcorn”)
<i>hnab</i> (“bag”)	+ <i>rau</i> (“put”)	+ <i>ntawv</i> (“paper”)	= <i>hnabrauntawv</i> (“schoolbag”)

Blending

The combination of two separate forms to produce a single new term is also present in the process called **blending**. However, in blending, we typically take only the beginning of one word and join it to the end of the other word. To talk about the combined effects of *smoke* and *fog*, we can use the word *smog*. In places where they have a lot of this stuff, they can jokingly make a distinction

between *smog*, *smaze* (smoke + haze) and *smurk* (smoke + murk). In Hawai‘i, near the active volcano, they have problems with *vog*. Some common examples of blending are *bit* (binary/digit), *brunch* (breakfast/lunch), *motel* (motor/hotel), *telecast* (television/broadcast), *Oxbridge* (Oxford/Cambridge) for both universities considered together and the *Chunnel* (Channel/tunnel) connecting England and France.

The activity of fund-raising on television that feels like a marathon is typically called a *telethon*, while *infotainment* (information/entertainment) and *simulcast* (simultaneous/broadcast) are other new blends from life with television. To describe the mixing of languages, some people talk about *Français* (Français/Anglais) and *Spanglish* (Spanish/English). In a few blends, we combine the beginnings of both words, as in terms from information technology, such as *telex* (teleprinter/exchange) or *modem* (modulator/demodulator). A blend from the beginnings of two French words *velours croché* (“hooked velvet”) is the source of the word *velcro*. How about the word *fax*? Is that a blend? No, see next category.

Clipping

The element of reduction that is noticeable in blending is even more apparent in the process described as [clipping](#). This occurs when a word of more than one syllable (*facsimile*) is reduced to a shorter form (*fax*), usually beginning in casual speech. The term *gasoline* is still used, but most people talk about *gas*, using the clipped form. Other common examples are *ad* (advertisement), *bra* (brassiere), *cab* (cabriolet), *condo* (condominium), *fan* (fanatic), *flu* (influenza), *perm* (permanent wave), *phone*, *plane*, *porn* and *pub* (public house). English speakers also like to clip each other’s names, as in *Al*, *Ed*, *Liz*, *Mike*, *Ron*, *Sam*, *Sue* and *Tom*. There must be something about educational environments that encourages

clipping because so many words get reduced, as in *chem*, *exam*, *gym*, *lab*, *math*, *phys-ed*, *poly-sci*, *prof* and *typo*.

Hypocorisms

A particular type of reduction, favored in Australian and British English, produces forms technically known as [hypocorisms](#). In this process, a longer word is reduced to a single syllable, then *-y* or *-ie* is added to the end. This is the process that results in *movie* (“moving pictures”) and *telly* (“television”). It has also produced *Aussie* (“Australian”), *barbie* (“barbecue”), *bickie* (“biscuit”), *bookie* (“bookmaker”), *brekky* (“breakfast”), *hankie* (“handkerchief”) and *toastie* (“toasted sandwich”). You can probably guess what *Chrissy pressies* are. By now, you may be ready to *take a sickie* (“a day of sick leave from work, whether for real sickness or not”).

Backformation

A very specialized type of reduction process is known as [backformation](#). Typically, a word of one type (usually a noun) is reduced to form a word of another type (usually a verb). A good example of backformation is the process whereby the noun *television* first came into use and then the verb *televise* was created from it. Other examples of words created by this process are: *donate* (from “donation”), *emote* (from “emotion”), *enthuse* (from “enthusiasm”) and *liaise* (from “liaison”). Indeed, when we use the verb *backform* (*Did you know that “opt” was backformed from “option”?*), we are using a backformation. Here are some other recent creations.

automation → *automate*

bulldozer → *bulldoze*

choreography → *choreograph*

mixture → *mix*

syllabification → *syllabify*

orientation → *orientate* → *orient*

One very regular source of backformed verbs in English is based on the common pattern *work* – *worker*. The assumption seems to have been that if there is a noun ending in *-er* (or something close in sound), then we can create a verb for what that noun-*er* does. Hence, an *editor* will *edit*, a *sculptor* will *sculpt* and *babysitters*, *beggars*, *burglars*, *peddlers* and *swindlers* will *babysit*, *beg*, *burgle*, *peddle* and *swindle*.

Conversion

A change in the function of a word, as for example when a noun comes to be used as a verb (without any reduction), is generally known as **conversion**. Other labels for this very common process are “category change” and “functional shift.” A number of nouns such as *bottle*, *butter*, *chair* and *vacation* have come to be used, through conversion, as verbs: *We bottled the home-brew last night; Have you buttered the toast?; Someone has to chair the meeting; They’re vacationing in Florida.* These forms are readily accepted, but some conversions, such as the noun *impact* used as a verb, seem to *impact* some people’s sensibilities rather negatively.

The conversion process is very productive in Modern English, with new uses occurring frequently. The conversion can involve verbs becoming nouns, with *guess*, *must* and *spy* as the sources of *a guess*, *a must* and *a spy*. Phrasal verbs (*to print out*, *to take over*) also become nouns (*a printout*, *a takeover*). One complex verb combination (*want to be*) has become a new noun, as in *He isn’t in the group, he’s just a wannabe*. Some other examples of conversion are listed here.

Noun Verb
→

Verb → Noun

<i>dust</i>	Did you <u>dust</u> the living room?	<i>to cheat</i>	He's a <u>cheat</u> .
<i>glue</i>	I'll have to <u>glue</u> it together.	<i>to doubt</i>	We had some <u>doubts</u> .
<i>referee</i>	Who will <u>referee</u> the game?	<i>to hand out</i>	I need a <u>handout</u> .
<i>water</i>	Would you <u>water</u> my plants?	<i>to hire</i>	We have two new <u>hires</u> .

Verbs (*see through*, *stand up*) can also become adjectives, as in *see-through material* or a *stand-up comedian*. A number of adjectives, as in a *dirty floor*, an *empty room*, some *crazy ideas* and *those nasty people*, have become the verbs *to dirty* and *to empty*, or the nouns *a crazy* and *the nasty*.

Some compound nouns have assumed other functions, exemplified by *the ball park* appearing in a *ball-park figure* (as an adjective) or asking someone to *ball-park an estimate of the cost* (as a verb). Other nouns of this type are *carpool*, *mastermind*, *microwave* and *quarterback*, which are also used as verbs now. Other forms, such as *up* and *down*, can also become verbs, as in *They're going to up the price of oil* or *We downed a few beers at the Chimes*.

It is worth noting that some words can shift substantially in meaning when they go through conversion. The verb *to doctor* often has a negative sense, not normally associated with the source noun *a doctor*. A similar kind of reanalysis of meaning is taking place with the noun *total* and the verb *run around*, which do not have negative meanings. However, if you *total* (= verb) your car, and your insurance company gives you the *runaround* (= noun), you will have a double sense of the negative.

Coinage

The invention and general use of totally new terms, or [coinage](#), is not very common in English. Typical sources are trade names for commercial products that become general terms (usually without capital letters) for any version of that product. Older examples are *aspirin*, *nylon*, *vaseline* and *zipper*; more recent examples are *granola*, *kleenex*, *teflon* and *xerox*. It may be that there is an obscure technical origin (e.g. te (tra)-fl(uor)-on) for some of these invented terms, but after their first coinage, they tend to become everyday words in the language. The most salient contemporary example of coinage is the word *google*. Originally a misspelling for the word *googol* (= the number 1 followed by 100 zeros), in the creation of the word *Googleplex*, which later became the name of a company (*Google*), the term *google* (without a capital letter) has since undergone conversion from a noun to become a widely used verb meaning “to use the internet to find information.”

New words based on the name of a person or a place are called [eponyms](#). When we talked about a *hoover* (or even a *spangler*), we were using an eponym. We use the eponyms *teddy bear*, derived from US president Theodore (Teddy) Roosevelt, and *jeans* (from the Italian city of Genoa where the type of cloth was first made). Another eponym dates from 1762 when John Montagu, the fourth Earl of Sandwich, insisted on having his salt beef between two slices of toasted bread while gambling. Apparently his friends started to ask “to have the same as Sandwich.”

Acronyms

Acronyms are new words formed from the initial letters of a set of other words. These can be forms such as *CD* (“compact disk”) or *SPCA* (“Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals”) where the pronunciation consists of saying each separate letter. More typically, acronyms are pronounced as new single words, as in *NATO*, *NASA* or *UNESCO*. These examples have kept their capital

letters, but many acronyms simply become everyday terms such as *laser* (“light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation”), *radar* (“radio detecting and ranging”), *scuba* (“self-contained underwater breathing apparatus”), a *sim* (“subscriber identity module”) card and *zip* (“zone improvement plan”) code. You might even hear talk of a *snafu*, which is reputed to have its origins in “situation normal, all fouled up,” though there is some dispute about the appropriate verb in there.

Names for organizations are often designed to have their acronym represent an appropriate term, as in “mothers against drunk driving” (*MADD*) and “women against rape” (*WAR*). Many speakers do not think of their component meanings. Innovations such as the *ATM* (“automatic teller machine”) and the required *PIN* (“personal identification number”) are regularly used with one of their elements repeated, as in *I sometimes forget my PIN number when I go to the ATM machine*. The *ATM* example is also known as an “initialism” (see Task A, page [65](#)).

Derivation

In our list so far, we have not dealt with what is by far the most common word-formation process to be found in the production of new words. This process is called **derivation** and it is accomplished by means of a large number of small “bits” of the English language that are not usually given separate listings in dictionaries. These small “bits” are generally described as **affixes**. Some familiar examples are the elements *un-*, *mis-*, *pre-*, *-ful*, *-less*, *-ish*, *-ism* and *-ness* which appear in words like *unhappy*, *misrepresent*, *prejudge*, *joyful*, *careless*, *boyish*, *terrorism* and *sadness*.

Prefixes and Suffixes

Looking more closely at the preceding group of words, we can see that some affixes are added to the beginning of the word (e.g. *un-*, *mis-*). These are called **prefixes**. Other affixes are added to the end of the word (e.g. *-less*, *-ish*) and are called **suffixes**. All English words formed by this derivational process have either prefixes or suffixes, or both. Thus, *mislead* has a prefix, *disrespectful* has both a prefix and a suffix, and *foolishness* has two suffixes. According to Dixon (2014: 11), English has about 200 derivational affixes, divided into 90 prefixes and 110 suffixes. We will investigate the range of English affixes in more detail in [Chapter 6](#).

Infixes

There is a third type of affix, not normally used in English, but found in some other languages. This is called an **infix**, which is an affix that is incorporated inside another word. It is possible to see the general principle at work in certain expressions, occasionally used in fortuitous or aggravating circumstances by emotionally aroused English speakers: *Halle**bloody**lujah!*, *Absogod**d**amlutely!* and *Un**f**uckinbelievable!*. We could view these “inserted” forms as a special version of infixing in English. However, a much better set of examples can be provided from Khmu (or Kamhmu), a language spoken in northern Laos and Vietnam.

	Verb	Noun	
(“to drill”)	<i>see</i>	<i>srnee</i>	(“a drill”)
(“to chisel”)	<i>toh</i>	<i>trnoh</i>	(“a chisel”)
(“to eat with a spoon”)	<i>hiip</i>	<i>hrniip</i>	(“a spoon”)
(“to tie”)	<i>hoom</i>	<i>hrnoom</i>	(“a thing with which to tie”)

From these examples, we can see that there is a regular pattern whereby the infix *-rn-* is added to verbs to form nouns. If we know that the form *srnal* is the Khmu noun for “an ear ornament,” then we can work out the corresponding verb “to put an ornament in the ear.” According to Merrifield *et al.* (2003), the source of these examples, it is *sal*.

For examples of another type of affix called a “circumfix,” see Task G, on page 67.

Multiple Processes

Although we have concentrated on each of these word-formation processes in isolation, it is possible to trace the operation of more than one process at work in the creation of a particular word. For example, the term *deli* seems to have become a common American English expression via a process of first borrowing *delicatessen* (from German) and then clipping that borrowed form. If someone says that *problems with the project have snowballed*, the final word can be analyzed as an example of compounding in which *snow* and *ball* were combined to form the noun *snowball*, which was then turned into a verb through conversion. Forms that begin as acronyms can also go through other processes, as in the use of *lase* as a verb, the result of backformation from *laser*. In the expression *waspish attitudes*, the acronym *WASP* (“white Anglo-Saxon Protestant”) has lost its capital letters and gained a suffix (*-ish*) in the derivation process.

An acronym that never seems to have had capital letters comes from “young urban professional,” plus the *-ie* suffix, as in hypocorism, to produce the word *yuppie* (first recorded in 1984). The formation of this new word, however, was helped by a quite different process, known simply as [analogy](#), whereby new words are formed that are similar in some way to existing words. *Yuppie* was

made possible as a new word by analogy with the earlier word *hippie* and another short-lived analogy *yippie*. The word *yippie* also had an acronym basis (“youth international party”) and was used for some students in the USA who were protesting against the war in Vietnam. One joke has it that *yippies* just grew up to be *yuppies*. And the process continues. Another analogy, with the word *yap* (“to make shrill noises”), helped label some of the noisy young professionals as *yappies*.

Many of these new words can, of course, have a very brief life-span. Perhaps the generally accepted test of the “arrival” of recently formed words in a language is their published appearance in a dictionary. In recent years, we have added *app* (from “application”) and *vape* (from “vaporizer”), both via clipping, *blog* (from “web log”) and *sexting* (“sexual texting”) via blending, and *unfriend* and *mint* (= “cool”) via conversion. Further examples are included in Task E, on page [66](#).

However, new additions can sometimes lead to protests from some conservative voices, as Noah Webster found when his first dictionary, published in 1806, was criticized for citing words like *advocate* and *test* as verbs, and for including such “vulgar” words as *advisory* and *presidential*. It would seem that Noah had a keener sense than his critics of which new word forms in the language were going to last.

Study Questions

- 1 When is an eponym a neologism?
- 2 Which word-formation process is the source of the English word *modem*?
- 3 Which two processes were involved in the creation of the verb *google*, as in *Have you ever googled yourself??*

4 Which process is clearly involved in creating the new term *selfie*?

5 What do we call the process whereby a new word is formed to be similar to an existing word?

6 Which of the following pairs contains an example of calque? How would you describe the other(s)?

(a) *footbooru* (Japanese) – *football* (English)

(b) *tréning* (Hungarian) – *training* (English)

(c) *luna de miel* (Spanish “moon of honey”) – *honeymoon* (English)

(d) *jardin d’enfants* (French “garden of children”) – *Kindergarten* (German “children garden”)

7 Can you identify the different word-formation processes involved in producing each of the underlined words in these sentences?

(a) *Don't they ever worry that they might get AIDS?*

(b) *That's really fandamntastic!*

(c) *These new skateboards from Zee Designs are kickass.*

(d) *When I'm ill, I want to see a doc, not a vet.*

(e) *The house next door was burgled when I was babysitting the Smiths' children.*

(f) *I like this old sofa – it's nice and comfy.*

(g) *I think Robyn said she'd like a toastie for brekky.*

(h) *You don't need to button it because it's got velcro inside.*

8 Identify the prefixes and suffixes used in these words:

misfortune, terrorism, carelessness, disagreement, ineffective, unfaithful, prepackaged, biodegradable, reincarnation, decentralization

9 In Khmu, the word *kap* means “to grasp with tongs,” and *tiap* means “to fold a small package.” What would be the words for “tongs” and “a small package”?

10 More than one process was involved in the creation of the forms underlined in these sentences. Can you identify the processes involved in each case?

(a) Can you FedEx the books to me today?

(b) Police have reported an increase in carjackings in recent months.

(c) Jeeves, could you tell the maid to be sure to hoover the bedroom carpet?

(d) I had to temp for a while before I got a real job.

(e) Is your friend Ian still blogging?

(f) Would you prefer a decaf?

Tasks

A What are “initialisms”? Were there any examples in this chapter?

B Who invented the term “portmanteau words”? How many examples were included in this chapter?

C Using a dictionary with etymological information, identify which of the following words are borrowings and from which languages they were borrowed. Are any of them eponyms?

assassin, clone, cockroach, denim, diesel, frisbee, horde, kayak, kiosk, nickname, penguin, robot, shampoo, sherry, slogan, snoop, taboo, tea, tomato, tuxedo, umbrella, voodoo

D When English words are borrowed into Japanese, they are subject to nativization, a process whereby they are typically given a syllabic pronunciation, as in *ingurishu* (“English”). Can you reverse the syllabification process to identify the following English words borrowed into Japanese? One list has items you can get at a place known as *makudonarudo*, the other has items connected to *supootsu*.

<i>chikin nagetto</i>	_____	<i>beesubouru</i>	_____
<i>furaido poteto</i>	_____	<i>booringu</i>	_____
<i>hotto doggu</i>	_____	<i>futtobouru</i>	_____
<i>juusu</i>	_____	<i>hoomuran</i>	_____
<i>kechappu</i>	_____	<i>jogingu</i>	_____
<i>sheiku</i>	_____	<i>shuuzu</i>	_____
<i>sofuto kuriimu</i>	_____	<i>sokkusu</i>	_____

E There are a lot of new words in English from IT (an acronym for “information technology”) and the widespread use of the internet (a blend from “international” and “network”). Using a dictionary if necessary, try to describe the word-formation processes involved in the creation of the underlined words in these sentences.

(1) *There are some teenage netizens who rarely leave their rooms.*

(2) *How much RAM do you have?*

(3) *I can't get some of the students to keyboard more carefully.*

(4) *Your friend Jason is such a techie!*

- (5) *Doesn't every new computer have a webcam now?*
- (6) *You should bookmark that site.*
- (7) *I got a great new app for my phone.*
- (8) *We're paying too much attention to bloggers.*
- (9) *Subscribers have unlimited downloads.*
- (10) *You should check the faq because the information is usually helpful.*
- (11) *Some people will have to learn better netiquette.*
- (12) *Hey, just heard about the accident, ruok?*

F In this chapter we noted an example (*Partnerlook*) of the creation of a new German word using one or more English words, yet with a meaning not found in English. In the following list, there are some more words in contemporary German that have been created from English words.

- (i) What is the technical term used to describe forms created in this way?
- (ii) Can you work out which meanings from the set below go with which words?

<i>der Barmixer</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Beamer</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Bodybag</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Flipper</i>	(= _____)
<i>das Handy</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Messie</i>	(= _____)

<i>der Oldtimer</i>	(= _____)
<i>die Peep Toes</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Shootingstar</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Smoking</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Talkmaster</i>	(= _____)
<i>der Tramper</i>	(= _____)

bartender	shoulder bag	tuxedo
cell phone/mobile	overnight success	women's open-toed shoes
hitchhiker	pinball machine	video projector
hoarder/pack rat	talk show host	vintage car

G Another type of affix is called a circumfix, as in these examples from Indonesian:

("big")	<i>besar</i>	<i>kebesaran</i>	("bigness")
("beautiful")	<i>indah</i>	<i>keindahan</i>	("beauty")
("healthy")	_____	<i>kesehatan</i>	("health")
("free")	_____	<i>kebebasan</i>	("freedom")
("kind")	<i>baik</i>	_____	("kindness")
("honest")	<i>jujur</i>	_____	("honesty")

1 Can you provide the missing forms in these examples?

2 What is the circumfix illustrated here?

3 For what type of word-formation process is the circumfix being used here?

4 Given the words *tersedia* (“available”), *sulit* (“difficult”), *sesuai* (“suitable”) and *seimbang* (“balanced”), how would you translate these words?

_____ (“availability”)

_____ (“difficulty”)

_____ (“suitability”)

_____ (“balance”)

5 After analyzing the following examples, what do you think the corresponding Indonesian words would be for “happy,” “just/fair” and “satisfied”?

ketidakjujuran (“dishonesty”)

ketidaksenangan (“unhappiness”)

ketidakadilan (“injustice”)

ketidakpuasan (“dissatisfaction”)

H Can you divide the following set of English compounds into nouns and verbs? How do you decide? Which part of the compound determines whether it is a noun or verb?

crash helmet, crash land, freeze dry, freeze frame, hang glide, hang nail, kick boxer, kick start, skim milk, skim read, sleep mode, sleep walk

I When Hmong speakers (from Laos and Vietnam) settled in the USA, they had to create some new words for the different objects and experiences they encountered. Using the following translations (from Downing and Fuller, [1984](#)), can you work out the English equivalents of the Hmong expressions listed below?

<i>chaw</i> (“place”)	<i>kho</i> (“fix”)	<i>hlau</i> (“iron”)	<i>cai</i> (“right”)
<i>dav</i> (“bird”)	<i>muas</i> (“buy”)	<i>hniav</i> (“teeth”)	<i>daim</i> (“flat”)
<i>hnab</i> (“bag”)	<i>nres</i> (“stand”)	<i>looj</i> (“cover”)	<i>mob</i> (“sickness”)
<i>kev</i> (“way”)	<i>ntaus</i> (“hit”)	<i>ntoo</i> (“wood”)	<i>nqaj</i> (“rail”)
<i>kws</i> (“expert”)	<i>tos</i> (“wait”)	<i>ntawv</i> (“paper”)	<i>tshuaj</i> (“medicine”)
<i>tsheb</i> (“vehicle”)	<i>zaum</i> (“sit”)	<i>tes</i> (“hand”)	

chawkhomob

kwshlau

chawnrestsheb

kwskhohniav

chawzaumtos

kwsntausntawv

davhlau

kwsntoo

hnabloomjtes

kwskhotsheb

kevcai

kwstshuaj

kevkhomob

tshebnqajhlau

kevnqajhlau

daimntawvmuastshuaj

Discussion Topics/Projects

I When we form compounds in English, how do we know whether to join the words (*hairspray*), join them with a hyphen (*hair-spray*) or leave a space between them (*hair spray*)? Using the examples below, and any others that you want to include in the discussion, try to decide if there are any typical patterns in the way we form compounds.

backpack, back-pedal, back seat, blackboard, black hole, black-tie affair, bulletin board, double bed, double-cross, house husband, house-warming, housewife, life-saving, lifestyle, life insurance, mother-in-law, mother tongue, postcard, Post-its, post office, workbook, work experience, work-to-rule

(For background reading, see chapter 3 of Denning, Kessler and Leben, [2007](#).)

II The sign in [Figure 5.1](#) contains a word (*flushable*) that you may not have seen before. But it isn't hard to understand. However, when we derive new words with a suffix such as *-able*, there seems to be some type of constraint on what is permitted. The words in the left column below are "acceptable" (that's one!), but the forms in the other two columns don't seem to be current English words. They are marked with an asterisk * to show that we think they are "unacceptable" (there's another one!). From these examples, and any others that you think might

be relevant to the discussion, can you work out what the rule(s) might be for making new adjectives with the suffix *-able*?

breakable	*carable	*dieable
doable	*chairable	*disappearable
downloadable	*diskable	*downable
inflatable	*hairable	*pinkable
movable	*housable	*runnable
understandable	*pencilable	*sleepable
wearable	*quickable	*smilable

(For background reading, see chapter 4 of *Language Files*, [2011](#).)



Figure 5.1

Further Reading

Basic Treatments

Denning, K., B. Kessler and W. Leben (2007) *English Vocabulary Elements* (2nd edition) Oxford University Press

Minkova, D. and R. Stockwell (2009) *English Words* (2nd edition) Cambridge University Press

More Detailed Treatments

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Downing, B. and J. Fuller (1984) "Cultural contact and the expansion of the Hmong lexicon" Unpublished paper, Department of Linguistics, University of Minnesota

Language Files (2011) (11th edition) Ohio State University Press

Merrifield, W., C. Naish, C. Rensch and G. Story (2003) *Laboratory Manual for Morphology and Syntax* (7th edition) Summer Institute of Linguistics

See also: wordspy.com