

AFFIXATION IN TEACHING WORD-BUILDING

Teaching word-building is one of the important tasks of teaching English as a foreign language. Good word-building skills enable a student to use the language more independently, to experiment with the language, to develop contextual guess and thus to enrich their vocabulary at a better pace. Word-building is tested (as a separate part or as a part of an integrated task, such as a structure task) in major international exams, such as FCE, CAE, CPE, TOEFL. In the Russian Federation it is also included into state exams at schools. However, teaching word-building is often reduced to the reference of some affixes to different parts of speech, and exam tips mostly focus on the correct grammatical form of the words.

Such issues should surely be taken into consideration, as well as some interchanges (such as in *long-length*), conversion (which is, however, rarely tested, but with which students should be familiar) and word-building synonyms (*unlimited – limitless*). Yet we believe, that great attention is to be paid to affixal semantics and collocation. Further we offer an example of how the material could be presented (in this paper we focus solely on noun-building suffixes):

№	Suffix	Meaning	Сочетаемость
1	er	Doer (builder) Instrument (knocker) Dweller (Londoner) Characteristic (fresher)	Verbs, nouns, adjectives
2	or	Doer (collector) Instrument (refrigerator)	Verbs (mostly with -ate и -t)
3	ee	Object (trainee)	Transitive verbs with the meaning «give»
4	ist	Doer (pianist) Follower (communist)	Nouns denoting instruments, sciences, political beliefs. Adjectives, denoting some trends
5	ite	Dweller (Sydneyite) Follower (Marxite)	Proper names
6	man	Dweller (Englishman) Doer (watchman)	Verbs, nouns, adjectives
7	ess	Feminisation (hostess)	Animate nouns, nouns denoting jobs
8	ette	Belittling (novelette)	Nouns
9	ing	Action (meeting) Result	Verbs

		(painting)	
10	al	Action (approval)	Verbs, mostly with -e
11	ness	Abstract notion (kindness)	Simple adjectives or adjectives with -y, -ful, -ous, -ive, -ed, -ish, -ward, -less, -ary, -ant, -worthy
12	ity	Abstract notion (eternity)	Adjectives with -al, -ial, -an, -ian, -ar, -able, -ed, -ous, -ose, -ical, -ive
13	ism	Theory (communism) Quality (heroism)	Proper names Adjectives denoting quality and language
14	ship	State/quality (leadership) Skill (sportsmanship)	Nouns denoting a person
15	dom	Unity (kingdom)	Nouns denoting a person
16	hood	State/quality (brotherhood)	Nouns denoting a person with the reference to the family, age, position
17	(c)ation	Action (admiration)	Verbs with -ify, -ize, -ate and some simple verbs
18	ment	No special meaning (department)	2-syllable verbs with the stresses 2 nd syllable, verbs with en-, em-, be-, -le, -er, -ish
19	ery	State/quality (misery) Unity (cutlery)	Nouns denoting a person, an object, an animal
20	acy	State/quality (delicacy) Unity (burocracy)	Adjectives with -ate Nouns denoting a job or an occupation
21	age	State/quality (homage) Unity (readerage) Result (leakage)	Nouns denoting a position or occupation, a concrete object Simple verbs

As we can see from the table above nounal suffixes vary in semantics and collocation. Students are to be encouraged to learn first of all the semantical differences, that will make the choice of the correct suffix much narrower. If there are still several synonyms collocation is to be considered. However, some suffixes still have synonyms (such as -ite and -ist), but in this case using any of them will be correct.

As we can see the system of word-building has its logic and teaching it can be not only intuitive (although a lot of authentic reading can beneficially make some choices intuitive).

References

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