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Suffixes with agent meaning “-er” and “-or” and their etymology

The article describes suffixation of English noun, etymological characteristics of suffix “-er” and “-or”, the description of its meaning, combinability of the suffixes with the other stems. Affixes can be treated as a way to enlarge the word stock of any language. Suffixes play a great role in the beneficence of the vocabulary, they can change not only the word meaning but also the fact that it belongs to another part of speech. Etymology reveals the origin of the suffix, its correlation to the other suffixes from relative languages. The word meanings can be changed with time, and this phenomenon also differentiates the suffixes and their meaning. As an example the two noun-forming suffixes were taken for a research.

Key words: word-formation, suffixation, noun, etymology, stem, neologism, meaning.

Introduction

Suffixation as one of the ways to enrich the English vocabulary is one of the major studies of lexicology, which deals not only with suffixes but also with prefixes. Suffixes can vary from making up the nouns, verbs, adjectives and the other parts of speech to changing the lexical meaning. On the whole, there are several ways to investigate the suffixes dividing them into peculiar speech parts, characterizing them from etymological viewpoint, or paying attention to the meaning which the suffixal word obtains.

The article deals with the etymological characteristics of the given two prefixes which were chosen on the grounds of their ability to combine with the verb stems for different reasons: to make up the new word with the new meaning. The meanings of the newly derived words are in most cases connected with the verb stem, and show the new meaning of the noun.

In this way, we can say that we can work with the new meaning, which in its turn replenishes the English word-stock finding a new meaning to an “old” stem. So far the suffixes in question are observed in the article without turning to the change of meaning, but to the descriptive side.

Materials and research methods

The research methodology is based on the modern characteristics of the suffixes in the article, taking into consideration the meaning it gives to the stem, also on the character given by etymological dictionary to the suffix. The works by P.M. Karashchuk, V.D. Arakin, T.M. Beliaeva were taken as the basis for historical etymological description of suffixes.

Etymological explanation of the suffixes reveals their historical background and gives a more precise and comprehensible definition to the word in question. A comparative analysis between the suffixes and their meaning serves as a fact of taking them into a more scrupulous observation under the question posed by the afore-mentioned methods. A diachronic analysis is presented here as a mixture of comparative and etymological analyses to determine the historical and social background of the material.

At the same time methods are spread to the analysis of the present day state of the words formed with the help of suffixes “-er” and “-or”. They also comprise a comparison as a major way to find the identity and difference in the material observed.

Results and discussion

The article is about the description of productivity of English-German suffixes “-er”, “-or” the history of their development and meaning.

Suffix “-er” can be characterized in two main ways: as the doer of the action and, as having instrumental meaning.

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Let's consider the first meaning: the doer of the action. Joining the noun stems suffix “-er¹” obtains the notion of the person living in the definite area to which the stem points, e.g.: borderer (a person living near the border), villager (inhabitant of a village), New Yorker (inhabitant of New York), islander (inhabitant of an island), hosteler (a student living in the hostel) [1, 2].

The same meaning suffix “-er¹” obtains in together with the adjective stems, which pertain to the same area of living: Britisher, northerner (inhabitant of the North), southerner (inhabitant of the South), foreigner (a person born in another country and speaking a foreign language) [2].

It also bears the same idea when it is combined with the adjectives of colour or a special meaning; in this way it has the meaning of a peculiar quality or property which the stem has: greener ((slang) a new person, newcomer, freshman), fresher ((slang) a freshman).

As Karashchuk P.M. states “in some cases suffix “-er¹” expresses “a man of the age to which the stem points”, and is joined to the stems of numerals: fifteeners and sixteeners (boys of 15 or 16 years of age), forty-niner (a 49-year old person)”.

With the stems of a verb suffix “-er¹” forms the biggest part of the word-stock which has the meaning of the doer of the action:

1. A man fulfilling the things to which the stem points (the professional activity): sewer (one who sews), learner (one who is learning), singer (one who sings), lecturer (a person, lower in rank than a professor, who gives lectures), player (one who takes part in or plays a game).

2. A man who acts in the definite way at a definite time: singer, learner, player.

3. A man with the character or an ability to do smth.: He is a good swimmer, I'm no swimmer.

“There are cases when suffix “-er¹” possesses all three shades of the meaning, by Karashchuk P.M., e.g.: player: “(1) an actor, 2) one who takes part in or plays a game, 3) a person who is able to play”; speaker: “(1) a person who speaks, 2) a person who is able to speak, 3) a person who makes a speech in public”.

In these cases the choice is predetermined by the context.

Verb stems to where suffix “-er¹” is attached can be classified accordingly to the semantic classes:

1. Verbs denoting professional activity or a kind of work: to dye (to give a colour to smth., usually by dipping it into a liquid) (dyer – one whose trade is dyeing), to assay (to test the purity of, make an examination to find out the purity, value) (assayer – one who works with test-tubes, a chemist), to dig (to break or turn up the ground) (digger – a person or thing that digs), to draw (drawer – a person who draws pictures), to design (designer), to burnish (burnisher – a person who polishes), to bore (borer – one who bores), to carve (carver – one who carves).

2. Verbs denoting the speech process. Nouns produced from such verbs characterize the person by his/her peculiarities: to blab (blabber), to brawl (brawler), to chatter (chatterer), to prattle (prattler), to roar (roarer), to stammer (stammerer), to whisper (whisperer).

3. Verbs denoting people's emotional state. In this case derived nouns form persons, and their stems point at the emotions: to admire (admirer), to avenge (avenger), to boast (boaster), to adore (adorer), to tempt (tempter).

4. Verbs of motion. Here the initial word denotes the action, and its derivative – a person performing the action: to fly (flyer), to hop (hopper), to climb (climber), to jump (jumper), to race (racer), to ride (rider), to swim (swimmer).

5. Verbs denoting feelings and perception: to hear (hearer), to see (seer), to watch (watcher).

Karashchuk P.M. marks that suffix “-er¹” can produce the nouns from verbal stems with particles (phrasal verbs): onlooker (a spectator) (look on – to watch). Sometimes the particle is put in its usual place, and suffix “-er¹” is joined directly to the stem: comer by, diner out, finder out [3].

Suffix “-er²” in Karashchuk P.M. opinion possesses instrumental meaning and is used to form the nouns that denote instruments, devices etc. with the help of which the action where the verbal stem presents is performed. Such verbal stems come from various fields of science, technique and agriculture: to sow (sower), to atomize (atomizer), to rectify (rectifier – a thing that rectifies), to fan (fanner), to scutch (scutcher), to condense (condenser – a part of a machine that condenses smth.), to compute (computer), to absorb (absorber), to propel (propeller – that which drives anything forward), to flat (flatter), to silence (silencer – a device to reduce the noise made by a gun etc.).

This suffix also forms nouns with denotation of “money”, they are expressed by numerals: fiver ((coll.) 5 dollars, 5 pounds), tenner ((coll.) 10 dollars/pounds).

In English there are a lot of derivatives with suffix “-er” which denote two meanings: of the doer of the action (agent) and instrumental. These words refer to slang, jargon: blighter (an unpleasant person, a bore,

destroyer) (to blight – injure, break the hopes, spoil the pleasure), bounder (an ill-mannered person) (to bound – to jump, spring), crammer (a special teacher who crams students for an exam.), (to cram – to learn hurriedly, fill one’s head with facts without studying them seriously), creepers (feet) (to creep – to move very slowly, hardly), peepers (eyes) (to peep – to look through a narrow opening, look slyly), smeller (nose) (to smell – to inhale the odour), janglers (money) (to jangle – to make a harsh, unmusical tone), stinker (a cheap cigar) (to stink – to give out a strong, nasty smell) and others.

Suffix “-er” is used to form compound nouns: can-opener, three-decker, tooth-picker and others.

It is productive and has a lot of newly formed nouns: giver-up, figurer, do-gooder, breakfaster, arrester, anchor-clanker, breather, golden-ager, plain-lifer, all-nighter [4].

Dictionaries can’t fix all the words which appear in the language. With the use of computers, Internet and the other devices connected with the quick adaptation to information, with the “opening” of the borders people began to communicate more often. Of course, new words are also built with other suffixes.

Etymological dictionary by T. Hoad gives the following definition to suffix “-er”: - OE *-ere* corresponds to Old Saxon *-ari* (Holland *-er*), OHG *-āri* (MHG *-ære*, Germ. *-er*), Old Scand. *-ari*, Gothic *-areis*: Germ. *-arjaz*, probably from Lat. *-ārius* – “-ary”.

As is seen from the etymology of its origin suffix “-er¹” has a lot of corresponding variants in ancient languages. T. Hoad explains the fact by the early appearance in Common Germanic language of the Gothic noun *laisareis* – “teacher” from Germ. *laisō* – “lore” which began to be associated with *laisjan* – “teach”. Such a model of joining the suffix “-er” was the initial step for its further use and to form the nouns with “-er” from verbal stems: OE *bæcere* – “baker” from *bacan*, *leornere* – “learner” from *leornian* and others.

Some Common German nouns as we think are constructed on the example of Latin nouns with the agentive meaning: OE *bōcere* – “scribe” = OHG *buochari*, Gothic *bokareis* from Common Germ. *bōk* – “book”, comes from Lat. *librārius* – “copyist, scribe” from *liber* – “book”.

In Middle English (ME) and later derivatives with “-er(e)” began to be used to form agent nouns. “-er¹” was also joined instead the other suffixes: *astrologer*, *astronomer* instead of *astrologien*, *astronomien*. In ME such nouns as “cater”, “fruiter”, “sorcer” acquired wider forms as *caterer* (one who provides meals, brought from outside), *fruiterer*, *sorcerer* (a magician, a wizard) which were formed on the analogy with the word “philosopher”.

Greek-Latin words ending in “-graphus”, “-logus” accepted the new form: “-grapher”, “-loger”.

As Hoad T.F. states “suffix “-er¹” is used to indicate nationalities and nations, citizens: *Londoner*, *Britisher*, *foreigner*, *islander*, *villager*”.

Suffix “-er²” to his own observations is used in the words borrowed from French, it comes from Old French *-er* – Lat. *-āris* – “-ar” or Anglo-Norm. *-er*, Old French *-ier* – Lat. *-ārius*, *-ārium* – “-ary”. Some ME words with “-er²” were changed to “-ar” by the analogy with Latin words: *coler* – “collar”, *scoler* – “scholar”.

Suffix “-er⁵” (from Lat. “-āre”) served as the ending of the infinitive in Anglo-Norman (Old French *-er*, *-ir*, *-eir*, *-re*), and was used to form nouns in English juridical documents mainly in XV, XVI cent.: *cesser* (tax payer), *demurrer* (procedural rejection), *retainer* (the fee paid for the services of barrister), *waiver* (rejection from law), *attainder*, *remainder*, *tender*. The words “dinner” and “supper” possess the same ending.

Concerning suffix “-er⁶” (probably the wider use of suffix “-er¹”) is used in slang: *bedsitter* (a place fit to live in), *footer* (football), *fresher* (freshman), *rugger/soccer* (rugby/football in Football Association) [5].

The suffix originates from Latin.

Thus, we can state the fact that suffix “-er” denotes a person of a definite professional activity. Among modern words made up with the help of this suffix we can mention: *applepolisher* – *bootlicker*, *toady*; *armtwister* – one who convinces by force; *babyboomer* – one who was born after the World War II (1945-1965); *babykisser* – a politician (who gets popularity by kissing the children of the electorate); *babysitter* – a nurse paid hourly; *backseatdriver* – irresponsible man who gives instructions; *barnburner* – sensation; *bean-counter* – book-keeper; *breather* – a break; *bridgebuilder* – peace-maker; *cheese-eater* – informer; *cliff-dweller* – one who lives in a tall house [4]. This suffix possesses a highly productive character.

In Modern English (MnE) there are different types of suffixation: a) by the part of speech; b) by the lexical and grammatical character of the stem to which the affix is added; c) by some groups in the bounds of one and the same part of speech; d) by definite stylistic character; e) by the productivity [6].

Let’s consider the classification under the heading c): noun-suffixes fall into those denoting:

- the doer of an action, e.g. *-er*, *-ant/-ent*, *-ist*, *-eer* (*baker*, *dancer*, *defendant*, etc.);

- when smth or smb belongs to e.g. -an, -ian, -ese, etc. (Arabian, Elizabethan, Russian, Chinese, Japanese, etc.);

- collectivity, e.g. -age, -dom, -ery (-ry), etc. (freightage, officialdom, peasantry, etc.);

- diminutiveness, e.g. -ie, -let, -ling, etc. (birdie, girlie, cloudlet, squireling, wolfling, etc.) [6].

In this classification we can see that not only suffix “-er” is used but also such suffixes as “-ant”, “-ent”, “-ist”. They are not as productive as suffix “-er”.

During the work conducted in the course of our research connected with the etymological and modern characteristics of suffix “-er” we found out that the suffix is the most productive among the other suffixes denoting the doer of the action.

Let’s turn to the suffix “-or”. Suffix “-or” is a synonym and a variant of suffix “-er”. However it does not possess such a wide range of meanings as “-er”. The use of “-or” spreads mostly to the instrumental meaning in science or techniques.

Suffix “-or” in the structure of agent nouns is a graphical variant of suffix “-er”. In the English language suffix “-or” came with the adoption of agent nouns of Romanic origin. In MnE (Modern English) it is positionally used with the “-ate” stems and the verb stems of Latin origin ending with /t/, /s/, /z/: innovator, attestor, aggressor, revisor. There is the tendency to use it equally with “-er”: constructor/-er, prohibitor/-er, rejector/-er, creatour>creator, werreyour>warrior, but somonour>summoner, interpretour>interpreter [7; 305]. This analogy can’t be used with the agent nouns originated from Old French as the terms of law as they preserve this meaning in modern English assessor, assizer, lessor, juror [8; 63]. These Anglo-Norman terms of law are preserved in the language because of their stylistic and semantic differences with the nouns in “-er”: abettor – abetter, conveyor – conveyer, acceptor – accepter. In neutral vocabulary there exists the tendency to equally use both suffixes: contemner/or, conjurer/or. Exception covers such modern nouns, which were composed from the verbs of Latin origin ending with /t/ or /s/: reactor, selector, aggressor, oppressor, incisor. However they are also included in this analogous equality which closes the morpheme “-or” in this position to the graphical variant of “-er”: constructor/er, prohibitor/er, rejector/er as was mentioned before. This equality also spreads to the agent nouns composed by the adaptive model from the bound variants of free stems: expositor (expose – exposition), extensor (extend – extension), compositor (compose – composition) and exposer, extender, composer. If it does not lead to any semantic differentiation (composer – the one who composes songs and lyrics, compositor – the one who works with the press) then the second noun is ousted successor = succeder (follower), introducer – introducer (the one who introduces). Nouns with suffix “-ator” should be mentioned separately, as they reflect the adaptive model of agent nouns composed from the verbs of imperfect aspect: respire – respirator, inspire – inspirator. Suffix “-ator” can also be marked in cases when the motivating verb had a doublet with “-ate”: emend = emendate – emendator. In a stylistically neutral vocabulary the nouns in “-ator” are being replaced by the nouns in “-er”: confuter = confutator, compiler = compilator. In scientific prose suffix “-ator” combining with verbal as well as substantive stems composes the nouns with the meaning of mechanism or technical appliance: inhalator, respirator, coolerator, trafficator [8; 118].

By T.M. Beliaeva opinion the nouns with “-or” being the law terms are opposed to the stylistically neutral nouns, as there is a semantic difference between the nouns in “-er” or “-or” (vender – vendor (law)) we can’t treat “-or” as an allograph of morpheme “-er”. The process of equality going on in modern English has not come to its end yet that’s why in some definite positions “-er” or “-or” are homonymous (sailer – sailor). This homonymy should be differentiated from graphical variant the result of which becomes the variants of one word but different in their meanings: constructor/-er [8; 64].

The same equality spreads to the agent nouns composed from the bound variant of free stem by neo-Latin model: exposer – expositor (exposition), compiler – compilator (compilation), extender – extensor (extension). It has become unnecessary in the language as well as the form with “-ator” (continue – continuator). Thus, nouns with “-ator” are replaced by the nouns with “-er”: computer – computator, inspirer – inspirator [9].

Karashchuk P.M. notes that borrowings with “-or” were bookish that’s why the use of suffix “-or” is restricted in comparison to the suffix “-er”.

In MnE “-or”:

- is joined to Roman stems;
- is able to combine with verbal stems referring to scientific language;
- is combined mostly with two-or-multi-syllable stems;
- is joined more often to the verbal stems in “-ate”;

- is characteristic of scientific style.

Generator, indicator, illuminator, radiator, insulator, refrigerator, lubricator, reactor, compressor, eliminator – all these nouns are the examples with the suffix “-or”. The amount of such words increased due to the scientific technical discoveries [3].

Conclusion

The suffixation is very important in vocabulary replenishment of English. It must be viewed from etymological side as well. Further studies in this field are connected with the research of the suffixes of the other parts of speech with abstract meaning.

Suffixes change the part of speech but not only the meaning of the word. Suffixes are divided into several parts: forming parts of speech, changing lexical-grammatical character of the stem, also attaching to the stem.

The given research is closely connected with dictionary work comprising the comparative method of the study.

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Н.С. Исабаева, Н.И. Букетова, А.Т. Аратаева

-er және -or агентивті мәніндегі жұрнақтар және олардың этимологиясы

Мақалада ағылшын тіліндегі зат есімнің *-er* және *-or* жұрнақтары, олардың мағыналық этимологиялық сипаттамалары және бұл жұрнақтардың басқа түбірлермен үйлесімділігі сипатталған. Қосымшаларды кез келген тілдің сөздік қорын молайту тәсілі ретінде қарастыруға болады. Жұрнақтар сөздік қорды байытуда үлкен рөл атқарады, олар сөздің мағынасын ғана емес, оның басқа сөйлем мүшесіне қатыстылығын да өзгерте алады. Этимология жұрнақтың шығу тегін, оның туыстас тілдердің басқа жұрнақтарымен байланысын ашады. Сөздердің мағыналары уақыт өте өзгеріп отыруы мүмкін, бұл құбылыс жұрнақтар мен олардың мағыналарын да ажыратады. Зерттеу нысаны ретінде жоғарыда айтылған зат есім тудыратын екі жұрнақ алынды.

Кілт сөздер: сөзжасам, жұрнақ, зат есім, этимология, түбір, неологизм, мағына.

Н.С. Исабаева, Н.И. Букетова, А.Т. Аратаева

Суффиксы с агентивным значением *-er* и *-or* и их этимология

В статье описаны суффиксы *-er*, *-or* английского существительного, их этимологическая характеристика значения, сочетаемость этих суффиксов с другими основами. Аффиксы можно рассматривать как способ увеличения словарного запаса любого языка. Суффиксы играют большую роль в обогаще-

нии словарного запаса, они могут изменять не только значение слова, но и его принадлежность к другой части речи. Этимология раскрывает происхождение суффикса, его соотношение с другими суффиксами родственных языков. Значения слов могут меняться со временем, и это явление также дифференцирует суффиксы и их значения. В качестве объекта исследования были взяты два указанных выше суффикса, образующие имена существительные.

Ключевые слова: словообразование, суффиксация, имя существительное, этимология, основа, неологизм, значение.

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