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## NOUN-FORMING SUFFIXES IN ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN: A CONTRASTIVE STUDY

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore and find similarities, differences, and distinctions between noun-forming suffixes in English and Russian languages, especially, that both languages belong to different branches of the Indo-European family. The method used in this study is the contrastive descriptive method. The findings of the study reveal that there are areas of similarities and differences between the two languages. The findings of this study could be used as effective teaching devices to teach and correct interference errors among learners.

**Keywords:** contrastive analysis, Affixation, derivational morphology.

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### INTRODUCTION

Being based on structural linguistics, contrastive analysis (CA) is regarded as the comparison of structures of two or more languages with the aim of finding out points of similarities and differences (Fisiak, Jack 1981; Roger, Richard 1991 & Gradman, Harry Lee, 1970). The contrastive program was extensively put into practice with the view of making explicit recommendations for the design of teaching materials and syllabi. Larsen - Freeman and Long (1991:52) state that "The most effective materials (for foreign language teaching) are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language."

It was first formulated by Fries (1945) and developed by Lado (1957) when behaviorism and structuralism were retaining great popularity in the 1950s and 1960s.

The idea of "Contrastive Hypothesis" was first introduced by Lado (1957) when he provided a comparative description of English and Spanish based on the assumption that a foreign or a second language teaching can be enhanced by comparing the learner's mother tongue with the language to be learned.

Languages, according to König & Gast (2008), may have similar and distinctive structures with other languages. Similarities cause no difficulties (positive transfer), but differences will, due to (negative transfer) or (interference). This suggests that learners should revolve around the linguistic differences between the two languages.

### Suffixation as a process of word formation

Morphology, as was defined by Nida (1949), is the study of morphemes and their arrangements in the formation of words. Thus, the process where new words are formed by attaching morphemes to bases is referred to as affixation. Such morphemes could be added at the initial position (prefix), the middle position (infix), or could be added at the final position (suffix), which is the focus of our study, namely noun-forming suffixes.

Noun formation can be found in the works of many researchers such as Abdulmahmoud (2010) who conducted a contrastive study of noun formation in English and Standard Arabic. In his study, he shows that English and SA share some universals, for example, the suffix -sm in English usually matches the suffix (iyyah) in Arabic. He also concluded that in both languages, derivational

affixes occur closer to the root than the inflectional affixes.

Suffixation as a way of noun-formation can also be found in Rajendran (2003) who discusses noun formation in Tamil, one of the languages in India.

Comrie and Thomson (1985), using different languages to illustrate manner, locative, objective and reason nominalization, concluded that the derived nouns from lexical verbs and adjectives may be classified into two broad groups: name of activity or state designated by the verb or adjective. These are action/state nouns which are action nouns created from action verbs and state nouns created from stative verbs and adjectives.

Dedicated studies of the Russian word-formation system from the point of structural-semantic approach can be traced in the works of A.N. Tikhonov, N.M. Shanskii, M.N. Notable contributions have also been made by the linguists (Fatkhutdinova, 2015; Miloslavskii, 1980;), Krasilnikova, 2011; Plotnikova, 2012; Vsevolodova, 2001), Slesareva, 2010; Surzhikova, 1988).

Shanskii (1968) suggests that affixation is the richest and most productive word-formation process in Russian. He describes the following three kinds of affixation possibilities: a) *prefixal* (prefixation) b) *suffixal* (suffixation) and c) *prefixal-suffixal* (circumfixation).

In addition to these ways of affixation, languages may vary in the ways they express the same semantics, and if in English, for instance, the noun *biolog-ist* is derived from *biology* through the addition of the suffix *-ist*, in Russian (and other Slavic languages) the same derivation does not involve the addition of an affix, but the subtraction of form, eg:

*biology* =bjɐ'lɔ:gya

*biologist* = → b'jɔ:lɐg

Such dissimilarities and many other distinctions will be thoroughly analyzed in the discussion section.

#### Limitation of the study

This study is concerned particularly with noun-forming suffixes in English and Russian languages, however, because of space limitation and, owing to the fact that Russian language is extremely rich in noun-forming suffixes, we had to

limit our study to analyzing only the principle suffixes of Russian.

#### Methodology

The research design in this study is qualitative for it suits the description analysis. The sources of data were collected from different textbooks and references on the morphology of English and Russian languages. Then, a descriptive method has been utilized to demonstrate the data using the principles of contrastive linguistics.

#### 1. Noun-forming suffixes in English

One way of classifying noun-forming suffixes in English can be either with reference to the resulted word-class after a suffix has been added to a base, or with reference to the grammatical class of the base to which they are added. For instance, the suffix *-ee* at the end of a word like *absentee* is a noun suffix because the addition of this suffix results in the formation of a noun. Meanwhile, this suffix, in the same example, has a de-adjectival function in the sense that it is added to the adjective (*absent*). Similarly, the suffix *-ish* at the end of a word like *bookish*, for instance, can be described as an adjective suffix because the addition of the suffix results in the formation of an adjective. Alternatively, we can also say that this is a de-nominal suffix because it changes a noun into another word-class.

Also, a suffix may belong to one grammatical class in the case of some words but to a different class in the case of other words. The suffix *-ish* in *bookish* is different from the suffix *-ish* in *reddish*. In the first example, it's an adjective suffix with de-nominal function, while in *reddish* it is an adjective suffix with de-adjectival function.

In view of these principles of classification, suffixes in English can be discussed in terms of the following types and subtypes.

#### Noun Suffixes

These suffixes can be discussed in terms of the following types and subtypes.

##### 1. Noun-forming suffixes with a de-nominal function

a. The following suffixes are used in the formation of abstract nouns.

-ship friendship, dictatorship, lectureship, membership

-ism racism, Hitlerism, impressionism  
 -hood widowhood, manhood, brotherhood, womanhood

-ery slavery, robbery, machinery, rocketry  
 -age mileage, frontage

**b.** As opposed to the suffixes listed in (a), these suffixes are used in the formation of concrete nouns.

-eer profiteer, mountaineer, auctioneer  
 -er villager, learner  
 -ess lioness, actress, waitress, hostess  
 -ette kitchenette, cigarette  
 -let leaflet, booklet, rivulet,

## **2. Noun suffixes having a de-adjectival function**

-ism fanaticism, romanticism, classicism, vulgarism  
 -ity nicety, vulgarity, falsity, obesity.

## **3. Noun suffixes having a de-verbal function**

-or supervisor, actor, survivor, accelerator  
 -ment amusement, development, amazement  
 -er reader, player, runner, driver  
 -ee examinee, employee, appointee, payee  
 -ation examination, starvation, justification  
 -ant participant, informant, assistant  
 -al revival, survival, denial, recital

Suffixes in English can also be classified from their ability to maintain the class of the base. In this respect, they can be classified into:

### **a. Class-maintaining Derivational Suffixes**

-some queersome  
 -ship scholarship, friendship, kinship  
 -ling duckling  
 -let rivulet, booklet, streamlet  
 -hood womanhood, manhood  
 -ette kitchenette, cigarette maisonette  
 -ess actress, princess, lioness  
 -dom kingdom, boredom, dukedom,

### **b. Class-changing Derivational Suffixes**

-ness eagerness, largeness, bitterness, dryness  
 -ment amendment, development, government  
 -ize nationalize, dramatize, liberalize  
 -er reader, player, believer, employer  
 -ence existence, preference, confidence  
 -ee employee, payee, absentee, divorcee  
 -ation reservation, affiliation, confirmation

-ate affectionate, passionate

-ance appearance, assistance, acceptance  
 It deserves mentioning here that a suffix may operate as a class-maintaining in some words but as a class-changing suffix in the case of other words.

For instance, the suffix -al operates as a class-maintaining suffix in the case of the word economical, but it operates as a class-changing suffix in the case of words like arrival and governmental.

The suffix -ly operates as a class-maintaining suffix in the case of the word deadly, but it operates as a class-changing suffix in the case of words like happily and foolishly.

Similarly, the suffix -ish operates as a class-changing suffix in the case of words like childish and boyish, but as a class-maintaining suffix in the case of words like blackish, greenish and bluish.

## **2. Noun-forming suffixes in Russian**

Noun-forming suffixes in Russian are enormous in number. They can be semantically classified to the following categories according to the following concepts they illustrate:

- (a) people's qualities, characteristics, occupations or places of origin;
- (b) types of animal;
- (c) objects;
- (d) abstract concepts;
- (e) female representatives of a group;
- (f) an attitude to an object, ranging from affection to loathing.

In our analysis of the suffixes, however, rather than following the above-mentioned order, we would better follow their alphabetical order as there are no specified suffixes for each category, so many suffixes are used within more than one category.

### **2. 1 (-ак/ а:k, -як/ ya:k)**

These suffixes are used to define people by reference to their place of origin, to some characteristic, or to the object with which their occupation is associated, e.g.

**рыба'к/ ryb'a:k** fisherman

**бедня'к/ bɛdn'ya:k** poor man

**моря'к/ mɔr'ya:k** seaman

**холостя'к/ hɔlst'ya:k** bachelor

## 2.2 -а'ла/'a:la: -и'ла/'i:la:

These expressive suffixes are used to define people by reference to a particular action. The nouns formed with these suffixes are of common gender.

**громи'ла/ grɒ'mi:la:** *thug*

**заправи'ла/ zɒpɾɒ'vi:la:** *boss*

**кути'ла/ ku'ti:la:** *fast liver, hard drinker*

## 2.3 -анин/'a:nɪn, -янин/'ya:nɪn

These are used to form nouns that indicate a person's social status, religion, ethnicity, or place of origin), e.g.

**дворяни'н/ dvɒrya'ni:n** *nobleman*

**мусульма'нин/ musl'ma:nɪn** *Moslem*

**южа'нин/ yu'z a:nɪn** *southerner*

## 2.4 -ант/'a:nt, -ент/ənt

These suffixes are used to define people in reference to some action or object, e.g.

**музыка'нт/ muzi'ka:nt** *musician*

**эмигра'нт/ ɛmɪ'gra:nt** *émigré*

## 2.5 -ация/'a:tsɪya:, -яция/'ya:tsɪya:

These noun-forming suffixes are adopted forms of the English suffix *-ation*).

**организа'ция/ ɒrgaɪ'za:tsɪya:** *organization*

**инфля'ция/ ɪn'fl'ya:tsɪya:** *inflation*

## 2.6 -ач/'a:tʃ

This suffix defines people by referring to their occupational activity or to their main characteristic, e.g.

**бога'ч/ bɒ'ga:tʃ** *rich man*

**скрипа'ч/ skrɪ'pa:tʃ** *violinist*

## 2.7 -ёнок/'jɔ:nɒk

This noun-forming suffix is used to denote the young of living creatures, e.g.

**Котёнок/ kɒt'jɔ:nɒk** *kitten*

**Поросёнок/ pɒrɒ'sjɔ:nɒk** *piglet*

## 2.8 -ёр/'jɔ:r

This suffix is used to define people by reference to their field of activity (cf. Eng-*er, -or*), e.g.

**Боксёр/ bɒks'jɔ:r** *boxer*

**Дирижёр/ dɪrɪ'ʒɔ:r** *conductor (of orchestra)*

## 2.9 -ец/'əts

This suffix denotes a person by reference to (a) some action or occupation; (b) a certain quality; or (c) place of origin or residence.

**торго'вец/ tɒr'gɔ:vətstrader**

**краса'вец/ krɒ'sa:vətshandsome man**

**африка'нец/ ɒfrɪ'ka:nəts** *African*

## 2.10 -ие/-ье/'iə

These de-adjectival noun-forming suffixes denote abstract nouns of quality, e.g.

**вели'чие/ vi'lɪtʃiə** *greatness*

**равноду'шие/ ravnɒ'duʃiə** *indifference*

## 2.11 -изм/'ɪzm

This suffix is similar to the English suffix *-ism* which denotes a doctrine or system and also activities or tendencies, e.g.

**атеи'зм/ atɪ'jɪzm** *atheism*

**капитали'зм/ kɒpɪtɒ'lɪzm** *capitalism*

**оптимиз'м/ ɒptɪ'mɪzm** *optimism*

**тури'зм/ tu'rɪzm** *tourism*

## 2.12 -ик/'ɪk

This suffix is used in words of international currency which define a person's field of activity, e.g.

**исто'рик/ ɪs'tɔ:rɪk** *historian*

**те'хник/ 'təhɪk** *technician*

## 2.13 -ика/'ɪkə

This suffix indicates a field of knowledge, a discipline (cf. Eng-*ics*), e.g.

**матема'тика/ matɪ'matɪkə** *mathematics*

**фи'зика/ 'fɪzɪkə** *physics*

## 2.14 -ина/'ɪnə

This suffix has miscellaneous functions, including:

(a) de-verbal function, to indicate the result of actions, e.g.

**цара'пина/ tsə'ra:pɪnə** *scratch*

(b) de-nominal function, to denote an individual specimen of a collective noun, e.g. **изю'мина/ ɪz'jumɪnə** (collect *изю'м*) *a raisin*

(c) to denote the meat of an animal or fish, e.g.

**бара'нина/ ba'ra:nɪnə** *mutton*.

(d) to denote dimensions, and in some other abstract nouns:

**длина' / dlɪ'na:** *length*

**тишина' / tɪʃɪ'na:** *silence*

## 2.15 -ионе'п/ ɪə'neəp

This suffix is used in words of international currency to define people by reference to their activity or outlook, e.g.

**коллекционе'п/ kɒlɪktsɪə'neəp** *collector*

## 2.16 -ист/'ɪ:st

This foreign origin suffix defines people by reference to some doctrine they hold or art or skill they practice.

**атеи'ст/ atɪ'jɪ:st** *atheist*

**журналист/ žurna'li:st** *journalist*

## 2.17–ка/ka

(a) With a de-verbal function, this suffix is used in nouns denoting an instrument or the result of an action, e.g.

**тёрка/ t'jɔ:rka** *grater*

**чи́стка/ 'tʃi:stka** *cleaning, purge*

(b) with de-adjectival function, this suffix denote objects which are described by the adjective in question + a noun, e.g.

**пятиле́тка/** = пятиле́тний план *five-year plan*

**Третьяко́вка=** Третьяко́вская галере́я *Tret\_jako'v Gallery*

## 2.18–лка/ lka:

With verbal roots, this suffix denotes an instrument or place associated with an action, e.g.

**зажига́лка/ zazɪ'ga:lka:** *cigarette-lighter*

**кури́лка/ ku'ri:lka:** *smoking room*

## 2.19–лог/ lɔg

This suffix denotes a specialist in a particular field.

**био́лог/ b'jɔ:lɔg** *biologist*

## 2.20–логия/ lɔ:gja

This suffix denotes a science.

**биоло́гия/ bya'lɔ:gja** *biology*

## 2.21–ние/ nɪə

A wide-spread de-verbal noun suffix, e.g.

**выраже́ние/ vɪra:'zɪnɪə** *expression*

**достиже́ние/ dɪstɪ:'zɪnɪə** *achievement*

## 2.22 –ник/ nɪk

This suffix has several uses, among them:

(a) defining people by reference to their character, occupation or activity, e.g.

**защи́тник/ za'ʃi:tnɪk** *defender*

**помо́щник/ pə'mɔ:ʃnɪk** *helper*

(b) defining people by reference to their actions, e.g.

**изме́нник/ ɪz'mənnɪk** *traitor*

(c) denotation of objects which contain something, e.g.

**кофе́йник/ kl'feɪnnɪk** *coffee-pot*

## 2. 23 –ок/ ɔ:k

This suffix has also several uses, among them those indicating:

(a) a person who performs an action, e.g.

**игро́к/ ɪg'rɔ:k** *player, gambler*

(b) The action or the result left over after it, e.g.

**скачо́к/ skɔt'ʃɔ:k** *a jump, leap*

## 2. 24 –ор/ ɔr

a suffix denoting an agent (cf. Eng -or, e.g.

**профе́ссор/ prɔ'fesɔr** *professor*

**тра́ктор/ t'ra:ktɔr** *tractor*

## 2. 25 –ость/ ɔst

In this suffix, the suffixes (e.g. -но́сть, -нно́сть, -мо́сть), are used to form abstract nouns. With adjectival roots, -о́сть is used to form feminine nouns denoting a quality (cf. Eng -ness, -ery, -ity, etc.), e.g.

**му́дрость/ 'mu:drɔst** *wisdom*

**я́сность/ 'jasnɔst** *clarity*

## 2. 26 –ота́/ ɔt'a:

With adjectival roots, this suffix forms abstract nouns denoting quality or condition (cf. Eng -ness), e.g.

**красо́та́/ kra:sɔt'a:** *beauty*

**чисто́та́/ tʃɪstɔt'a:** *cleanness, purity*

## 2.27–ство/ stva:

(a) This suffix can be added to nouns to refer to people, denoting position, quality, branch of activity (cf. Eng -ship), e.g.

**а́вторство/ 'a:ftɔrstva:** *authorship*

(b) With adjectival roots, denoting a quality or condition, e.g.

**бога́тство/ Bl'ga:tstva:** *richness, wealth*

## 2.28 –тель/ tel

It is a suffix added to the root of transitive verbs to form masculine nouns denoting an agent, usually a person, but also possibly a thing (cf. Eng -er, -or), e.g.

**дви́гатель/ d'vɪ:gətel** *engine*

**писа́тель/ pɪ'sa:tel** *writer*

## 2.29 –тор/ tɔr

It is a suffix used to denote persons who do or things which carry out some activity; cf. Eng -(a)tor), e.g.

**инстру́ктор/ ɪns'tru:ktɔr** *instructor*

**организа́тор/ ɔrgɔnɪ'za:tɔr** *organiser*

## 2.30–ун/ u:n

Adverbial noun-forming suffix defines persons by reference to their actions which they perform or to which they are prone, e.g.

**Врун/ vru:n** *liar*

## 2.31-щик/ʃɪk, -чик/ tʃɪk

These suffixes define persons by reference to some object or institution associated with their occupation; also denoting some objects by reference to their function, e.g.

**бараба́нщик/ bara'ba:nʃɪk** *drummer*

**счётчик**/'ʃɔ:tʃɪk *counter* (person, i.e. *teller*, or instrument, i.e. *meter*)

## 2.32-ье/ тә

It is added to noun roots and a spatial prefix, this suffix is used to form nouns denoting region, e.g.

**заполя'рье/ зарп'я:тә** *polar region*

**примо'рье/ прг'мә:тә** *seaside*

## 2.33 Noun suffixes denoting females

### 2.33.1 -анка/'а:нка:, -янка/'я:нка:

**америка'нка/ лмерг'Ка:нка:** *American woman*

**китай'нка/ китл'я:нка:**, *Chinese woman* (м кита'ец).

### 2.33.2 -иня/-ыняба'рыня

**герои'ня/ гтрл'уенуа:** *heroine*

**-иса/'тса:,-есса/'еса:**

**актри'са/ акт'гх:са:** *actress*

**поэте'сса/ раә'tәсса:** *poetess*

### 2.33.3 -иха/'х:ха:

**труси'ха/ tru'si: ха:** *cowardess*

### 2.33.4 -ица/'тса:

**краса'вица/ крл'са:vtsja** *beautiful woman*

### 2.33.5 -ка/ ка

**япо'нка/ је'рә:нка:** *Japanese woman*

### 2.33.6 -ница/'нтса:

**рабо'тница/ рл'бә:tnitsa:** *worker*

### 2.33.7 -ша/ ја:

**секрета'рша/ секе'та:рја** (*woman*) *secretary*

### 2.33.8 -ья/ туа

**болту'нья/ бл'ту:nyа** *chatterbox*

## Conclusion and findings

1. As in English, suffixes in Russian can be class-maintaining and class-changing.
2. In Russian, the number of noun-forming suffixes defining people is much greater than the number in English. Among them are the suffixes:  
(-ак/ а:k, -як/ я:k), (-а'ла/'а:ла:, -и'ла/'т:ла:), (-анин/'а:нин, -янин/'я:нин), (-ант/а:nt, -ент/әnt), (-ач/ а:tʃ), (-ец/ ets).
3. Being of foreign origin, some suffixes both in English and in Russian are similar, among them are: (Engl. -ism, Rus. -изм/ izm), (Engl. -ation, Rus. -ация/'а:tsyа:, -яция/'я:tsyа, (Engl. -er, Rus. -ер/ jә:r), (Engl. -ist, Rus. -ист/ i:st.), (Eng. -ess, Rus. -'са).
4. Except the suffix -ess, almost all noun-forming suffixes in English are of common

gender. In Russian, however, we find the opposite; almost all of them are gender-marked, with the exception of the suffixes (-а'ла/'а:ла:, -и'ла/'т:ла:) which are of common gender, eg. **заправи'ла/ злргл'в:ла:** *boss*

5. In Russian, the number of suffixes forming feminine nouns is much greater than in English. While In English, there is the suffix -ess, we have noticed that there are at least eight suffixes forming feminine nouns in Russian (see 2.32).
6. Some of the suffixes in Russian might be treated as combinations of more than one suffix, e.g. -н-ие; -ств-о; -ист-ый; -н-ый.
7. A number of less common noun suffixes in Russian has not been within the scope of this study, among them are: **холоди'льник** *refrigerator*, **слов'а'рь** *dictionary*, **дру'жба** *friendship*, **кла'д/бище** *cemetery*, **пут'ёвка** *travel permit*, **то'пливо** *fuel*, **больн'и'ца** *hospital*.
8. Russian is richer in diminutive, augmentative and expressive suffixes that indicate the speaker's attitude towards it, examples of which are: -ик/до'мик *little house*, -ка/иде'йка *a silly idea*, -ок/-ёк/ветеро'к *breeze*.
9. Opposed to English, diminutives and augmentatives are of the same gender as the noun to which the suffix is attached, even when the suffix ends with a vowel normally associated with another gender. For example, the noun **городи'шко**, god-forsaken town, is masculine like **ро'д** even though nouns in -о are generally neuter.

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