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Table of Contents

Noun-forming suffixes in Old English: the semantic aspect

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Abstract

The article examines the semantic peculiarities of suffixes in Old English. It has been hypothesized that suffixes that coined nouns stipulate the meaning of derived nouns depending on the gender and semantic meaning of bases. In order to identify such features, an analysis of Old English non-recursive derivatives was conducted. The analysis of the semantic meaning of suffixes enables us to single out twenty-one semantic groups of noun-derivatives and their bases. The most frequent semantic groups of bases are social, physiological and physical activities, abstractions, locations, social stratification, result of actions and age with suffixes coining nouns that belong to a set number of semantic groups and also having a specific focal meaning. The majority of suffixes would form 3 - 5 semantic groups of noun-derivatives. Our findings reveal that the Old English period primarily required the means of elaborating abstractions, results of actions, new social roles, religious notions, new structures, and locations. At the same time, and with the exception of animals and food, semantic groups such as age and state did not employ a wide range of means to enlarge their domain. We may also conclude that certain semantic groups show preferences in terms of gender. And we define the study of semantic peculiarities of masculine, feminine, and neuter derivatives as the next step of our research.

Keywords: *suffixation, semantic groups, gender, non-recursive derivation*

OLD ENGLISH suffixes have attracted considerable academic interest on the grounds of their semantic peculiarities. The coinage has raised considerable discussion among scholars over a variety of different semantic aspects due to two main reasons: the richness and complexity of derived words and the relative transparency of word-formation as a whole in Old English..

Some theorists (cf. Jespersen 1942, Kastovsky 1992) have stated that suffixes form networks of semantic meanings, for example, *agent*, *means* or *result of action*, which are common to all of them and which cluster around a central semantic notion such as *action/fact*. Others suggest that every suffix develops a unique combination of such meanings in a hierarchy of its own over time (Lloyd 2007, 603). At the same time Dieter Kastovsky, Randolph Quirk and Charles Wrenn and Lass agree on the loss of productivity and the formal opaqueness of many of the Old English affixes inherited from Proto-Germanic while providing fairly large inventories of formally transparent affixes with different degrees of morphological productivity (Kastovsky 1992).

Another significant question raised by Rochelle Lieber concerns the restrictions on stacking up derivational suffixes or, more specifically, of semantic restrictions on suffixation.

> To what extent is the attachment of a particular suffix dependent on the semantic characteristics of its base? Not surprisingly, given the general lack of attention to suffixal semantics, there has been relatively little work done on the semantic restrictions on affixation. So, to the extent that particular affixes select for particular syntactic categories of bases, they also show concomitant semantic selection. (Lieber 2004, 154)

Another peculiarity of Old English suffixes is their role in gender assignment for derived nouns. Old English had three

genders (masculine, feminine and neuter), an arrangement which it inherited from Proto-Indo-European. The system of grammatical gender was not determined by sex, but was instead based on the system of declension. This has survived in all Germanic languages with appropriate phonological changes (e.g. IE o-stem nouns became Germanic a-stem nouns due to an independent change of IE *o* to Germanic *a*). The system of declension in Germanic languages (and, thus, in Old English) included consonantal nouns (for example, n-stem), vocalic nouns (a-stem, o-stem and others) and athematic nouns (Hogg 1992, 126). Each group had its peculiarities in terms of gender. In his study of phonology and morphology, Hogg offers a diagram that gives the approximate proportion of nouns in each of the main types consonantal and vocalic (Hogg 1992):

> Masculine vocalic – 35%
> Masculine consonantal – 10 %
> Feminine vocalic – 25%
> Feminine consonantal – 5%
> Neuter vocalic – 25%.

Hogg goes on to specify the gender of each group. The a-stem nouns were all masculine and neuter, and the o-stems all feminine, whilst the u-stems contained no neuter nouns. N-stem declension contained a large number of feminine and masculine nouns and only two neuter nouns.

The question that still remains is that of the principle of gender assignment. According to Greville Corbett (1991, 7), gender assignment depends on two basic types of information about the noun: its form and its meaning. Once these are determined, formal and semantic gender assignment systems can be distinguished.

Old English has a lexical gender-system which is semantically, formally or idiosyncratically determined (Dolberg 2012, 2). While some scientists claim that semantic fields show a certain tendency

to homogenise with regard to the gender of their members (Jones 1967, 290), other theorists, such as Zubin and Köpcke, contradict this assertion, stating that a given semantic field tends to feature all genders in order to maximise contrast and to facilitate reference-tracking (Zubin and Köpcke 1981, 447).

Letizia Vezzosi proves that gender variance depends on various semantic and pragmatic factors that may interfere with the Old English grammatical gender assignment system, i.e., the Old English noun classification. More precisely, in addition to semantic traits such as (± animate) (± human), further semantic differentiations, of significance from an anthropological or cultural point of view such as (± containing) (± power), are related to gender variability. Whereas semantic features such as (± animate) or (± power) play roles in gender assignment systems in the languages of the world, gender assignment in Old English seems to be sensitive to another unexpected feature, namely semantic roles: more precisely, masculine and feminine genders are preferred when the noun plays the role of an agent, whereas neuter gender is selected for the patient. As with other semantic features interfering with Old English grammatical gender assignment, this parameter will be shown to derive from the same and more general principle (± individuated) (Vezzosi 2006, 90).

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to identify the scope of productive Old English suffixes and explain their semantic peculiarities in relation to the base of a derivative and its gender.

With this aim in mind, the following research questions were raised:

(1) What are the most productive word forming suffixes in Old English and the most pliable gender of nouns in Old English to suffixal word-formation?

In this research, we used the definition of the term *productivity* offered by Dwight Bolinger (Bolinger 1948) as "the statistically

determinable readiness with which an element enters into new combinations." Focusing on the productivity of suffixes we would definitely use a more simplified concept of this notion as one that can be measured by counting the number of attested types with a suffix at a given point in time. The procedure of establishing the productivity of suffixes based on hapax legomena offered in the works of Harald Baayen and Ingo Plag (cf. Baayen and Lieber 1991, Plag 1999) was not applicable in this article as our research is limited only to dictionary entries, thus types of derivatives without further study in texts. Harald Baayen and Ingo Plag suggest that the productivity is the quotient of the number of hapax legomena n with a given affix and the total number of tokens N of all words with that affix:

$$(1) \quad P = n \ / \ N,$$

Thus explaining that P expresses the rate at which new types are expected to appear when N tokens have been sampled; the probability of coming across new, unobserved types given that the size of the sample of relevant observed types equals N (Plag 1999, 26). Instead, we rely on Laurie Bauer who stated that, from a diachronic perspective, the stage in which frequency becomes relevant precedes the stage in which productivity is introduced; he further states that type frequency (*type frequency* refers to the number of different words that occur with the morphological category under consideration) is a factor that aids productivity (Bauer 2001, 98).

(2) What are the semantic peculiarities of suffixes and bases of derivation?

In order to answer question 2 of our analysis of the semantic content of suffixes we adhered to the point of view offered by Amanda Pounder, which suggests that semantic relationships between a complex word-formation and its base are incorporated on several layers of meaning: lexical meaning, *categorial* meaning,

and word-formation meaning (Ponder 2000, 124). On this basis, we classified the bases according to their lexical meaning and established the meanings of derived words first; then, on the basis of the obtained data, we formulated main word-formation rules and thus validated the suffix meanings.

The role of bases in suffixation in Old English has been scrutinized in terms of categories. Alonso studied all cases of suffixation (both recursive and non-recursive) and concluded that one of the basic properties of suffixation is recategorization, thereby suggesting the possibility that most suffixes are attached to predicates belonging in categories other than that of nouns. The data of the analysis confirm this view and show the limited presence of nominal bases. Up to 1,952 of the 3,059 predicates under scrutiny take a non-nominal base, including 1,134 verbs, 802 adjectives, 12 adverbs, 2 numerals, 1 pronoun and 1 preposition. This means that 63.81% of the nouns present a shift between the category of the input predicate and the suffixed output lexeme (Alonso 2012, 78).

(3) Is there a correlation between Old English gender and the semantics of derived nouns?

The material of the article includes 1556 nouns formed by means of suffixation (23 suffixes) in the Old English period selected from *An Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* edited by J. Bosworth and T.N. Toller (Bosworth 2010). In the analysis we focus on the suffixes and the characteristics of the bases of derivation. We believe that bases of derivation can show tendencies that can explain or help us understand the further development of the semantic content of coined words.

The units included into our analysis comply with the following requirements: 1) all units are non-recursive. Although it is known that the combination of derivational processes is very frequent at this stage of the language (Alonso 2012, 66), we have selected nouns

with only one suffix and no prefixes in order to avoid any possible ambiguities of semantic interpretation; 2) variants of suffixes are not included into the analysis; 3) analysed units do not express an agentive meaning as this group does not belong within the sphere of interest of our article.

When a grammatical category of gender of OE nouns is at play, the most productive gender in terms of word-formation is feminine (1096 nouns), followed by masculine – 385 nouns and neuter with 76 derivatives in total (Bosworth 2010): *-ung* (f; 375 derivatives), *-ness* (f; 337), *-scipe* (m; 87), *-cræft* (m; 81), *-weard* (m; 60), *-stów* (f; 56), *-dóm* (m; 48), *-hád* (m; 47), *-ling* (m; 41), *-ræden* (f; 40), *-lác* (n; 28), *-leást* (f; 27), *-els* (m; 22), *-ríce* (n; 20), *-þu* (f; 18), *-wíse* (f; 16), *-wist* (f; 13), *-incel* (n; 12), *-oþ* (n; 10), *-sæta* (m; 7), *-mód* (n; 7), *-cen* (n; 5), *-bære* (m; 3).

Method

At the start of the investigation, we set 28 semantic groups to identify the meaning of derivatives and bases. We defined this process as the creation of a meta-language for our investigation. At first, our task was to separate as many meanings of Old English suffixes as possible to see a real picture of the coining process semantics in the Old English period. Carrying out the analysis, we reduced the number of groups omitting those which were not found to occur more than twice.

Some of the groups seemed to be close in meaning or maybe difficult to differentiate between; for example, those showing *activity – state – result*. Anna Zbierska-Sawala has noted that the categories of action and state are intrinsically related and that in certain contexts deverbal nouns can be seen as expressing states which result from action. A result noun might then express a mental or physical state (repentance, absence or simply a state of affairs, a deficiency) (Zbierska-Sawala 1992, 20). Nonetheless, we

chose to adhere to our meta-language with the purpose of finding possible semantic peculiarities.

The analysis showed that in terms of quantity of occurrence and thus the validity of suffixal meanings in Old English, only 21 semantic groups were relevant and would be the focus of discussion in this article. These groups are:

Group 1 Notions of Humans
Group 2 Social Stratification
Group 3 Family
Group 4 Administration
Group 5 Traits of Character
Group 6 Feelings
Group 7 Skills/Knowledge
Group 8 Age
Group 9 Abstractions
Group 10 Social Activities
Group 11 Physical Activities
Group 12 Physiological Activities
Group 13 Result of Actions
Group 14 State
Group 15 Religion
Group 16 War
Group 17 Animals
Group 18 Lifeless Objects
Group 19 Food/Taste
Group 20 Structures
Group 21 Location

Research

As the first step in our research, we offer an overview of all suffixes on the basis of their etymology and derivatives. This

analysis serves to establish the semantic peculiarities of each suffix separately.

We then provide a detailed analysis of the suffix –*ung*, while other information obtained by our research is presented in the accompanying tables.

The suffix is from Proto-Germanic **-unga* (**-ingō*, **-ungō*) which is derived, in turn, from Proto-Indo-European **-enkw-*. The selected data show that in the Old English period this was one of the most productive suffixes used to form nouns of the feminine gender from verbs (200 verbal bases are singled out), substantival bases (110 derivatives in Old English), adjectives (34 examples) and other parts of speech (adverbs, prepositions etc.).

The suffix *-ung* was added to the bases denoting largely different activities. The main meaning which the suffix possessed in the Old English period was that of *process*:

(1) *Gr11 Physical Activities* – 72 nouns;
    N, f   creóp   – ung   - Ø (creeping)
    V, s2 *creópan*   –process – FEM.NOM.SG
    Gr10 Social Activities – 62 nouns;
    N, f   hǽlett   –ung   - Ø (greeting)
    V, w1 *hálettan*   –process- FEM.NOM.SG
    Gr12 Physiological Activities – 31 nouns;
    N, f   speów   –ung   - Ø (vomiting)
    V, w1 *speówan* – process- FEM.NOM.SG

The next meaning of the suffix *-ung* is state which pertains to the nouns of the semantic group *Feelings*. These nouns are formed from substantival, adjectival and verbal bases denoting feelings, abstract notions and actions.

(2) *Gr6 Feelings* – 62 nouns;
    N,f prút   – ung – Ø (pride)
    Adj. *prút*   – being FEM.NOM.SG

One more semantic meaning of the suffix *-ung* is *result*. This group is formed by nouns derived from words denoting process, result, abstract notions, social stratification and skills.

(3) *Gr13 Result* – 62 nouns;
    N,f ǽwn   – ung – Ø (wedlock)
    V, w2 *ǽwnian* – result FEM.NOM.SG

The meaning of *abstraction* is traced in 21 nouns with the suffix *-ung*. There is no unanimity in the semantics of bases used to form these nouns, as they denote abstract notions, activities, feelings, age and colour.

(4) *Gr9 Abstraction* – 21 nouns;
    N,f wundr   –ung   – Ø (wonder)
    N, n *wundor*   – abstraction FEM.NOM.SG

A certain concurrence between the semantics of bases and derivatives should be noted: the suffix would coin nouns belonging to the same semantic groups as the bases. Nouns denoting different activities, abstractions, feelings and traits of character serve for the coining of derivatives with the given suffix.

The results that we obtained in the process of analysing the derivatives are presented in Table 1.

While analysing the suffixes, we tried to apply semantic categories to define each suffix. Thus, the following groups of suffixes were delineated: those coining abstractions, those with diminutive meaning, stative suffixes, location suffixes, resultative ones, a group of people notion suffixes, privative and instrument suffixes. At the same time, we established that coined nouns are usually connected with the following spheres of life: relations or feelings, religion, authority and power, people, skills, and knowledge. The possibility of each suffix to belong to a certain

semantic group and at the same time have additional shades of meaning created a stable situation for the non-competing existence of Old English noun suffixes filling gaps in the world picture of people at that time in developing spheres of life, such as social relations and activities, and religion.

Abstract nouns as indicators of the development of a more complex social environment and other circumstances play an important role in word-formation in the Old English period. Twelve Old English noun suffixes coin words which name abstract notions (see Table 1). For some of these suffixes, abstraction is the primary semantic meaning (6 suffixes), although in most cases niches of additional semantic meaning conveying can be defined.

The suffix *-ness* coined names of abstractions, feelings, and traits of character. The anthropocentric character of this suffix is revealed fully in all semantic groups of derived nouns, even those of *State* and *Result*. Other suffixes conveying abstract meaning are *-scipe*, *-dóm*, *-cræft*, *-þu*, *-wist*, and *-rǽden*.

(5) N, m friþ   –scipe – Ø (peace)
     Adj. friþ   – abstraction MASC.NOM.SG.
     N, m freo   –dóm– Ø (freedom)
     Adj. freo   – abstraction MASC.NOM.SG.
     N, m ellen   –cræft – Ø (power)
     N, m ellen   – abstraction MASC.NOM.SG.;
     N, f earm   –þu – Ø (misery)
     Adj earm   – abstraction FEM.NOM.SG..
     N, f ed   –wist – Ø (existence)
     Adj. ed   – state   FEM.NOM.SG.;
     N, f teón   –rǽden – Ø (wrong)
     N, m teón   – state   FEM.NOM.SG

At the same time, each one of these cases has an additional specialization of the meaning. Accordingly, *-scipe* shows its Modern English characteristic to be a collective suffix. The suffix *-dom* is

usually connected with power and authority. The etymology of -*cræft* defines its sphere as knowledge and skills in various arts and crafts. The suffix *-wist* bearing its meaning of existence form nouns denoting abstractions, food, result, and structures, everything that is necessary for preserving life.

If, for example, we take into consideration diminutive suffixes -*incel* and *-cen* we can observe the differences in their sphere of application: names of locations and structures were coined by means of *-incel*, while names of animals and objects by means of -*cen*:

(6) N, n hús   –incel   – Ø (small house)
     N, m hús   – diminutive NEUT.NOM.SG.;
     N, n ci   –cen   – Ø (chicken)
     N, m coc\i-mut – diminutive NEUT.NOM.SG.

The stative adjectives *-wīse* and *-hád* differ from each other specializing in abstract and religious states correspondingly.

(7) N, f riht   –wīse – Ø (justice)
     Adj. riht   – state FEM.NOM.SG.
     N, m fǽmne   –hád– Ø (chastity)
     N, f fǽmne   – state MASC.NOM.SG.

Location suffixes *-rice*, *-bǽre*, *-stow* convey the same general meaning (Gr 20, 21) but in different realms: *-rice* would deal with administrative and religious notions, *-bǽre* would coin names of locations, and *-stow* would mostly denote structures of a general character:

(8) N, n land   –ríce   – Ø (region)
     N, n land   – location NEUT.NOM.SG.;
     N, n weald   – bǽre   – Ø (region)
     N, m weald   – location NEUT.NOM.SG.;

N, f wíc   –stów   – Ø (dwelling)
N, n wíc   – location FEM.NOM.SG.

Stative adjectives *-wīse* and *–hád* differ from each other, specializing in abstract and religious states correspondingly.

(9)   N, f riht   –wīse – Ø (justice)
       Adj. riht   – state FEM.NOM.SG.
       N, m fǽmne   –hád– Ø (chastity)
       N, f fǽmne   – state MASC.NOM.SG.

A group of resultative suffixes in Old English includes *-ung*, *-lác* and *-oþ*. According to the dictionary definition, the OE noun suffix *-lác* denotes "activity or process of, gift" when coining nouns from other nouns. Its resultative meaning becomes vivid in derived nouns denoting religion, war, and skills. In contrast to this, other suffixes of this group derive nouns mainly from verbs. In the OE period the suffix *-oþ* was used to coin neuter nouns from verbs and adjectives. This is the only neuter suffix that coins words from verbs this explains why its semantic content is very similar to that of the feminine suffix *-ung* rather than to other neuter suffixes.

The suffixes *-weard*, *-ling* and *-sǽta* form nouns to denote people or groups of people. The suffix *-sǽta* is defined as dweller/agent with an anthropocentric emphasis. The suffix has preserved its etymology in its semantic content; *-sǽta* is from Proto-Indo-European **sed-* (to sit) and it later developed into the noun *sǽta* with the meaning of "a dweller". Thus, we have two sets of bases in which the suffix is used to coin new words, a place or structure to live in and an object that is connected with the process of sitting. Another suffix, *-weard*, is a functional anthropocentric suffix. The suffix *-ling* is in general anthropocentric, dealing with notions of humans, social stratification, family, age and food.

(10)   N, m cot   –sǽta– Ø (cottage dweller)

N, n cot   – person MASC.NOM.SG.
N, m erfe   –weard – Ø (heir)
N, n erfe   – person MASC.NOM.SG.
N, m sib   –ling   – Ø (sibling)
N, f sib   – person MASC.NOM.SG.

The OE suffix *-leást* is unique as it belongs to the privative semantic category, which is not common among noun suffixes. The dictionary defines it as a "suffix forming nouns denoting lack, want or absence of". It should be emphasized that this suffix is not preserved in the Modern English period. The suffix formed abstractions, traits of character, and feelings.

The instrument suffix *-els* is the only suffix in the Old English language with the primary semantic meaning of objects. The semantic content of the suffix is explained by the fact that it works with bases that are either verbs, thus forming instruments of the process, or lifeless objects, thus specifying their usage or meaning:

(11) N, m fæt   –els– Ø (vessel)
      N, n fæt   – structure MASC.NOM.SG.

On the basis of our findings, we applied the methodology used by Vea Escarza in her structural-functional analysis of the formation of Old English nouns by means of affixation (Vea Escarza 2016). The functions aim to define the relationship between suffixes and their bases of derivation. We modified this approach slightly to emphasize the semantic content of derivatives, and thus suffixes.

First, we formulated Form Rules (FR) for each suffix in the following way. The symbol ⊕ marks that affixation precedes a suffix. The right column of the operation (s.c.) stands for stem conditions that determine the lexical class of the base. "X" denotes the function of denoting a certain semantic content. The full process is demonstrated only once, and only the final outcome of

the analysis is provided for all other functions. We also list the meanings in order of their significance in terms of derivation productivity: number of suffixes and number of derivatives.

(12) FR1 < x ⊕ scipe; "FR1"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f,n) >
       gálscipe "luxury" from *gál* "lust"

The next step is to illustrate the operations (O) of the derivation:

(13) O< x ⊕ scipe > ; "O1"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f,n) >
       < ABSTRACTION("X") >

On the basis of all operations we establish semantic rules for derivations as follows:

(14)
       < ABSTRACTION("X") >
       O1< x ⊕ ness > ; "O1"; s.c.: Adj/Adv/N(m,n)/V >
       O2< x ⊕ ung > ; "O2"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f,n)/V >
       O3< x ⊕ stow > ; "O3"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f,n) >
       O4< x ⊕ liest > ; "O4"; s.c.: N(m,f,n) >
       O5< x ⊕ thu > ; "O5"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f) >
       O6< x ⊕ wist > ; "O6"; s.c.: Adj/Prep >
       O7< x ⊕ wíse > ; "O7"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f) >
       O8< x ⊕ hád > ; "O8"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f,n) >
       O9< x ⊕ cræft > ; "O9"; s.c.: Adv/N(m,f,n)/V >
       O10< x ⊕ dóm > ; "O10"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,n) >
       O11< x ⊕ scipe > ; "O11"; s.c.: Adj/N(m,f) >
       O12< x ⊕ oþ > ; "O12"; s.c.: Adj/V >
       O13< x ⊕ ræden > ; "O13"; s.c.: N(m,f,n) >
       From *GR 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 18, 19*

The semantic group ABSTRACTION is the most prominent in Old English in terms of both the number of derivatives (188 nouns) and the number of suffixes (13). Abstractions are formed from bases in nouns denoting humans, other abstractions, feelings, traits of character, lifeless objects, food, and structures and locations.

It should also be mentioned here that the formation of the abstraction semantic group in Old English contradicts the argument in Ingo Plag's work where he suggests another semantic restriction on affixation, this time a somewhat more general one: that we should not expect to find suffixes that form abstract nouns which attach to other suffixes which form abstract nouns (Plag 1999, 76).

A further analysis of English suffixes suggests that redundancy in the derivation is possible for base + suffix (non-recursive) and for base+suffix+suffix (recursive suffixation):

(15) N,f *ge- gearw -ung -ness* - Ø (preparation)
     RES -N, n *gearwe* (clothing) -ABST-ABST-FEM.NOM.SG.

The second semantic group that stands out in Old English in terms of the number of suffixes that participate in coining this content is RESULT OF ACTIONS. Other semantic groups have a considerably lower number of suffixes: from 6 to 2.

Some semantic groups were not significantly represented in the structure of any suffix, and these are treated as minor for the discussed suffixes content in the period. On this basis, we can draw a number of conclusions about the correspondence between three components of derivation: certain semantic groups of derived nouns and suffixes and bases (see Table 2).

Conclusion

The examination of the transparency of non-recursive derivation has yielded a number of interesting results. Firstly, in the Old English period, the most productive gender in terms of word-formation was feminine, followed by masculine nouns and then neuter derivatives. Although the number of suffixes under analysis was almost the same for all three genders. All established derivatives were coined from nouns of all three genders, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, and other parts of speech (prepositions, pronouns). Due to the productivity of the suffix *-ung*, the most frequent semantic groups of bases are social, physiological and physical activities. Other vital semantic groups of bases are abstractions, locations, social stratification, result of actions and age. It should be noted that some semantic groups of derived nouns can only be formed from bases belonging to the same group: age, animals, and physiological activities. Other semantic groups are formed from various bases triggering the transition from concrete to abstract or from humans to skills or activities.

Secondly, while analysing the semantic content of derivatives the general conclusion based upon the number of nouns from each group is that abstractions are the most numerous group, followed by result of actions, activities, skills, social stratification, feelings, locations, traits of character and others. We can state that although each suffix has a number of realized semantic components, it also has a specific focal meaning. This focal meaning sometimes has additional aspects and can depend upon the gender and the etymology of the suffix, meaning that not all of the domains of usage could be distinguished as primary. The results indicate that the majority of suffixes would form 3 - 5 semantic groups of noun-derivatives, with a limited number of suffixes traced in 7-9 groups or 1-2 groups. Also, it is possible to divide the suffixes according to their primary meaning and additional semantic content. Thus, we differentiate between the following groups:

a) suffixes that are unique in terms of the semantic content they create: *-least* (with privative content for abstractions, traits of character, substances/food), *-els* (used to create concrete nouns, lifeless objects);

b) suffixes that group together with or without additional aspects of certain semantic content: diminutives *-incel* (locations and structures) and *-cen* (objects, people, animals); location suffixes *-bǽre* (locations and structures), *-stów* (religion and war) and *-ríce* (administration, church and places); person suffixes *-ling* (notions of humans, social stratification, family, age), *-sǽta* (dweller) and *-weard* (function); stative suffixes *–hád* (religious and anthropocentric) and *-wíse* (abstractions, skills, result); resultative suffixes *-lác* (religion, war and skills) and *-rǽden* (abstraction/anthropocentric); action suffixes *-ung* and *-oþ* (very much alike); and the most numerous group of abstraction suffixes *-wist* (existence), *-ness* (anthropocentric, result, state), *-scipe* (collective), *-cræft* (skills/knowledge), *-dóm* (power-oriented) and *-þu* (high level of abstraction).

Further study of OE suffixes may reveal a competitiveness based on common semantic content and the development of differentiating features.

Semantic groups of derived nouns are classified according to sets of suffixes influencing the meaning of derived nouns. In the Old English period, the semantic group ABSTRACTION proves to dominate in terms of the productivity of suffixes. This would seem reasonable given the transition from a more primitive to a more complicated style of living in this period. The number of suffixes forming nouns of abstract notions which the group includes is surprising for this period. Another semantic group with an unusual number of suffixes and derivatives is RESULTS OF ACTIONS, with 9 suffixes coining this semantic content emphasising different spheres of life in the Old English period. All other semantic groups of derivatives are created by a smaller number of suffixes—from 6 to 2 suffixes. The critical and basic groups of ANIMALS and

FOOD account for only 2 – 1 suffixes each, which is probably explained by the lack of need to create new notions in these domains.

In terms of the third question, we suggest that further research is required, although certain conclusions may be drawn even at this stage of analysis. As we can see from Table 2 certain semantic groups show preferences in terms of gender. We define the study of semantic peculiarities of masculine, feminine, and neuter derivatives as the next step of our research, as a more detailed analysis would provide a broader outlook on the issue of derivational semantics.

Therefore, we can conclude that, in terms of derivation, the Old English period primarily required the means of elaborating abstractions, results of actions, new roles in societies, religious notions, new structures, and locations. At the same time, and with the exception of animals and food, semantic groups such as age and state did not use a wide range of means to enlarge their domain. The group of social, physiological and physical activities was enlarged by means of two of the most productive suffixes.

Appendix A

	Gr1	Gr2	Gr3	Gr4	Gr5	Gr6	Gr7	Gr8	Gr9	Gr10	Gr11	Gr12	Gr13	Gr14	Gr15	Gr16	Gr17	Gr18	Gr19	Gr20	Gr21
-ung					+				+	+	+	+	+								
-ness				+	+				+				+	+							

-leást			+		+	+							+		
-wíse					+	+		+							
-ræden			+			+	+	+							
-wist						+		+					+	+	
-þu			+	+		+									
-stów									+	+				+	+
-lác					+			+	+	+					
-incel	+											+		+	+
-cen											+	+			
-ríce		+							+						+
-bǽre														+	+

59

Table 1. Frequency of Old English noun suffixes.

Suffix	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
-oþ							+	+	+	+	+				
-ling	+	+	+			+									
-hád	+	+				+	+			+					
-sǽta	+														
-cræft					+		+				+				
-dóm			+		+		+			+					
-scipe	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+	+				
-weard	+		+	+											
-els								+				+		+	+

Table 1. Frequency of Old English noun suffixes.

Semantic Group of Derivatives	Suffixes (Number)	Gender of Derived Nouns	Semantic Group of Bases
ABSTRACTION	scipe/ hád /ung/ness/wíse	m (4), f (7), n (2)	GR 1, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11,

	/wist/rǽden/lá c/oþ/ þu /least/cræft/do m (13)		18, 19
RESULT OF ACTIONS	scipe/els/ung/n ess/wíse/wist/r ǽden/lác/oþ (9)	m (2), f (5), n (2)	Gr 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13
NOTIONS OF HUMANS	weard/scipe/há d/sǽta/incel/li ng (6)	m (5), n (1)	Gr 1, 6, 9, 13, 18, 20, 21, 22
RELIGION	dóm/hád/lác/st ów/rice (5)	m (2), f (1), n (2)	Gr 2, 9, 11, 13, 15
STRUCTURES	els /wist/incel/stó w/bǽre (5)	m (2), f (2), n (1)	Gr 9, 11, 15, 18
LOCATIONS	els/ ríce /incel/stów/bǽ re (5)	m (2), f (1), n (2)	Gr 1, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 18
SKILLS/KNOWLED GE	leást /lác/dóm/ wise/ cræft (5)	m (2), f (2), n (1)	Gr 1, 7
ADMINISTRATION	weard/ ríce / scipe / dóm (4)	m (3), n (1)	Gr 1, 2, 3, 4, 13, 21
FEELINGS	ung/ ness / scipe / þu (4)	m (1), f (3)	Gr 6, 7, 9, 10
TRAITS OF CHARACTER	leást / ness /rǽden / scipe (4)	m (1), f (3)	Gr 1, 5, 21
SOCIAL STRATIFICATION	ling/ hád / scipe (3)	m (3)	Gr 1, 5, 9, 18, 20
FAMILY	ling / scipe / weard (3)	m (3)	Gr 3, 13
SOCIAL ACTIVITIES	ung/ rǽden / oþ (3)	f (3), n (1)	Gr 9, 10, 13
PHYSIOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES	ung/ leást / oþ (3)	f (2), n (1)	Gr 12
LIFELESS OBJECTS	els/ incel / cen	m (1), n (2)	Gr 11, 18

	(3)		
WAR	weard / stów / lác (3)	m (1), f (1), n (1)	Gr 10, 11, 16, 21
PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	ung/ oþ (2)	f (1), n (1)	*Gr 11*
STATE	ness / scipe (2)	m (1), f(1)	*Gr 9, 10, 11, 14*
AGE	ling/ hád (2)	m (2)	Gr 8
FOOD/TASTE	wist/ leást (2)	f (2)	*Gr 18, 19*
ANIMALS	cen (1)	n (1)	Gr 17

Table 2: Correlation between semantic groups, suffixes and semantics of bases.

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