

TRANSITIONAL MORPHOLOGY

Combining forms (CFs) are a major morphological phenomenon in modern English, yet while they have been discussed in some morphological literature, no full-length study has been devoted to this topic so far. This pioneering book addresses that gap by providing a framework in which CFs are marked as distinct from their neighbouring categories such as abbreviations and blending. It splits CFs into four distinct categories – neoclassical (e.g. *bio-therapy*, *zoo-logy*), abbreviated (e.g. *e-reader*, *econo-politics*), secreted (e.g. *oil-gate*, *computer-holic*), and splinters (e.g. *docu-* from *documentary* in *docudrama*). It shows that the notion of CF spans a wide spectrum of processes, from regular composition to abbreviation, from blending to analogy, and schema. Modern and emerging English CFs are analysed by adopting a corpus-based approach and measuring their realised, expanding, and potential productivity. Comprehensive yet accessible, it is essential reading for researchers and advanced students of morphology, English historical linguistics, corpus linguistics, and lexicography.

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STUDIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE

TRANSITIONAL
MORPHOLOGY

Combining Forms in Modern English

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Preface

The topic of combining forms is not neglected in main morphological works, but it is commonly relegated to the category of neoclassical combining forms. Most scholars have included discussion on neoclassical combining forms or on the formations resulting from them, i.e. neoclassical compounds, in their description of English word-formation. However, more recent categories of combining forms have been either excluded from morphological accounts or merged with the blending process. The demarcation line between combining forms and other bound morphemes, such as splinters, affixoids, or even affixes, is not clear-cut, and morphologists as well as lexicographers still tend to label the same bound morphemes using different terms or, conversely, use the same term for actually diverse categories of morphological elements.

This book is an attempt to clarify what counts as a combining form, what distinguishes it from other word-formation processes, and what may be a potential form, having the characteristics of some existing combining forms but still not being a recognised one. It shows that the notion of combining form covers a wide spectrum of processes, from regular composition to abbreviation, from blending to analogy, schema, and paradigm. Combining forms may find their birth in blends, but the availability of novel splinters and their profitability in the coinage of new words can confer productivity on the combining form to the point of being considered an affix. Hence, it is difficult, and even incorrect, to classify combining forms as either composition or derivation, as for their heterogeneity and borderline nature they occupy an indeterminate area of morphology which is called 'transitional'.

This book is only partially on neology, as it focuses on novel combinations as well as on the models triggering them. The models show the regularity and the targets confirm the productivity, while what happens in-between remains under-explored. This book intends to fill this gap in morphological

research by discussing and accommodating different categories of combining forms under the same umbrella term of ‘transitional morphology’.

I am very thankful to pioneers in this field, such as Adrienne Lehrer and Beatrice Warren, whose groundbreaking papers on modern English combining forms attracted my attention as a student and are still inspiring my research.

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Parts of this book were presented at conferences and colloquia, whose audiences not only offered countless comments and suggestions but, above all, showed interest in the topic of combining forms. The valuable discussions with scholars, at both national and international levels, confirmed the need for a novel and fresh investigation of combining forms in modern English. I am indebted to all those who participated in the discussions and contributed with their ideas and thoughts.

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Abbreviations

BYU	Brigham Young University
C	(morphological) category
COCA	Corpus of Contemporary American English
D.	Dutch
DC	District of California
E.	English
EP	expanding productivity
EU	European Union
(F)CF	(final) combining form
Fr.	French
G.	German
GBC	Google Books Corpus
Gr.	Greek
HTR	hapax legomena/token ratio
(I)CF	(initial) combining form
It.	Italian
IUPAC	International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry
Lat.	Latin
N(C)	number (of tokens) in a corpus
NOW	News on the Web Corpus
occ.	occurrence(s)
OE	Old English
OED(2–3)	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (2nd/3rd edition)
PP	potential productivity
RP	realised productivity
Sp.	Spanish
Sw.	Swedish
TTR	type/token ratio
V	vocabulary

