PREFIXES OF GERMANIC ORIGIN

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the use and meaning of German prefixes, as well as their impact on word formation in English. German prefixes are grammatical features that are added to the beginning of a word to change its meaning or function. The prefixes will be examined in terms of their etymology, frequency of use, and common word formation patterns. They can also indicate a verb's location, tense, aspect, or modality. Prefixes are essential to the German language, and mastering them requires a solid understanding of them. The research will also look into how these prefixes affect the overall structure and meaning of German words. The research will be conducted using a combination of primary and secondary sources, such as German language dictionaries and texts, and linguistic studies on prefixation in German. The study's findings will shed light on the rich and complex nature of German word formation and its underlying grammar rules. The study also delves into the etymology of the prefixes and how they have evolved over time. The study's goal is to provide a comprehensive understanding of German prefixes and their usage for both German language learners and native speakers.

Introduction

It will be easier for us to understand unfamiliar English words if we are aware of common prefixes and suffixes. Additionally, it can help us spell words more accurately. The term "prefix" refers to the addition of a letter or group of letters to the beginning of a word. Prefixes can change the meaning of a word. English frequently uses Germanic prefixes because it is a Germanic language and because it has many words that have been borrowed from other Germanic languages. There are numerous Germanic suffixes (affixes added to the end of a word) and infixes (affixes added within a word) that are used in English and other Germanic languages in addition to prefixes. Germanic prefixes are a valuable resource for deciphering word meanings and creating new words in these languages. We will investigate the various Germanic prefixes in this project, as well as their meanings and applications in various linguistic contexts. We will also have the chance to use these prefixes to form our own words and practice putting them in sentences.

German Prefixes

Even though English contains many Germanic prefixes, we will start by mentioning a few of them. One can expect to find a sizable number of verbs with inseparable prefixes derived from Germanic when browsing an Old English dictionary. Using Table 1 as an example, the prefixes with the highest type frequency are those that combine with the greatest variety of root verbs and

also have the highest token frequency. A clear example is provided along with the suggested original spatial meaning for each of these prefixes, which is not always uncontested.

Table 1. Old English inseparable prefixes derived from Germanic

OE prefix	Meaning	Example	Gothic cognate	German cognate
a-	out, away (Gmc. *ar-)	*adrifan* 'drive out/away'	*uz-, ur-*	*er-*
be-	around	*berowan* 'row round'	*bi-*	*be-*
ge-	on, to (cf. Lehmann 1986, Hiltunen 1983: 49–50)	*gecuman* 'come together, arrive'	*ga-*	*ge-*
for-	?round about, all over	*forfaran* 'pass away, perish'	*fair-*	*ver-*
of-	away from	*ofhealdan* 'withhold, retain'	*af-*	*ab-*
on-/and-	against	*andswarian* 'answer'	*ana-*	*ent-*
to-	apart	*tobrecan* 'break asunder'	*dis- (?), twis-*	*zer-*

The number of (prefix-verb) entries in Middle English (ME) dictionaries is significantly less than in Present-Day English (PDE), where it has completely disappeared. However, there is one prefix that stands out as an exception, and that is *be-*. The only prefix from the list above that has not been lost to the English language and is still somewhat productive today is this one.

The Frequency History of Be-/To

Our initial hypothesis had been that all prefixes started to decline starting in late Old English, and that be- also started to decline but more slowly. However, as shown in Figure 1, our corpus analysis revealed that *be-* takes up an exceptional position in that its token frequency continued to rise in the early Middle English period, just as the token frequency of the other prefixes (such as *to asunder*) had begun to decline. In contrast to most of the other prefixes, *be-* is still useful today, or at the very least, new be-verbs are occasionally created. The loss of the Germanic prefixes is frequently attributed to the semantic bleaching of those words, in which case their presence was no longer necessary and they were easily omitted. While in use, a prefix like to, meaning "asunder," had much more concrete and specific semantic content than *be-*; however, *to-* has since vanished from the language, whereas *be-*, which has largely lost its lexical meaning, is still in use.
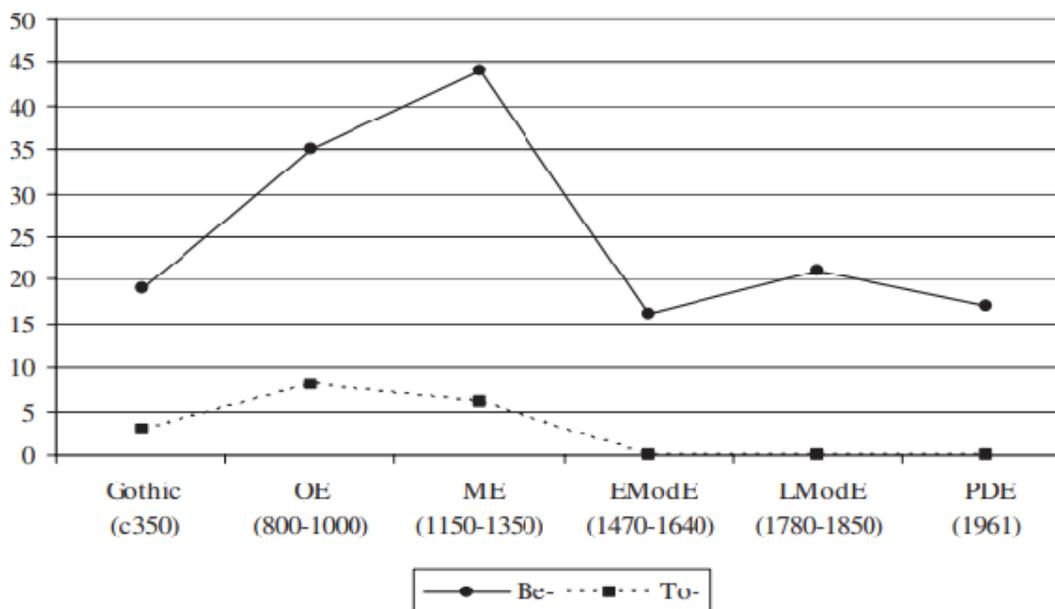
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Figure 1.   Prefix occurrences per 1,000 lexical verbs*
      * OE = sample from Old English; ME = Middle English sample; EModE
      = Early Modern English sample; LModE = Late Modern English sample;
      PDE = Present-Day English sample (based on *The Tagged LOB corpus*)

Examples using words that start with prefix *be*:
1.   They will **be**come part of the solution.
2.   Is it **be**cause winning the award gives them more confidence?
3.   He was climbing alone, something I guess you are not allowed to do, especially if you are a **be**ginner like Shipton was.

Common Words Beginning with German Prefixes

As we previously stated, there are a number of prefixes in English with Germanic roots that are frequently used in everyday speech, including words from technical and scientific terminology. Here are a few illustrations:

for-: this prefix is used to form verbs that indicate movement or direction, meaning "away" or "off". For example "forbid," which means to command someone not to do something, "forsake,[1]" "forbear[2]" and other.

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[1]Forsake: to leave someone forever
[2] Forbear: to prevent yourself from saying or doing something

Example:

1. God **for**bid that he should be humane, should love, or pity, or think of what is just and unjust.

2. She will never **for**sake you or cause you harm.

3. A woman could not **for**bear declaring openly that her faith had saved her.

mis-: this prefix means "badly" or "incorrectly" and it is often used to create words that describe actions or behaviours that are wrong or inappropriate. For example, "mistake," "mischief," "misunderstand."

Example:

1. Killing her would be a **mis**take, father.

2. They are best known for causing **mis**chief and playing pranks

3. They **mis**understand the old man in the shop, who they assume to be a redneck bigot.

over-: This prefix is used to form verbs that indicate excess or superiority, meaning "too much" or "excessively". For example "overdo," "overcome," "overwhelm."

Example:

1. There may be a tendency to **over**do other things also, which could lead to an expanded waistline.

2. I was beginning to **over**come these difficulties when an event occurred which changed everything.

3. You don't want to **over**whelm young children with complicated puzzles.

un-: this prefix means "not" or "opposite of" and it is often used to create words that describe things that are the opposite of what is expected or desired. For example"unhappy," "unaware," "uncertain."

Example:

1. She was suddenly lost in the **un**happy never after.

2. Hopefully they were **un**aware of her discomfort.

3. He was silent, **un**certain how to answer.

under-: this prefix means "below" or "less than" and it is often used to create words that describe things that are inferior or insufficient in some way For example, "undermine," "undercover," "underpaid."

Example:

1. News and information that **under**mine[3] their credibility or authority aren't so welcome either.

2. She'd been deep **under**cover in much worse situations.

3. They were complaining about how their master was **over**working them but in fact they were underpaid.

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[3] Undermine: to make someone less confident or less powerful

up-: This prefix means "toward" or "to a higher position" and it is often used to create words that describe things that are moving or pointing in an upward direction. For example "uphold," "upgrade," "uplift."

Example:

1. He accepted the decision of the council and resolved to **up**hold it.
2. It's time to **up**grade and add more money.
3. Further evidence of this **up**lift[4] is found in old beach lines now well above the sea-level.

re-: This prefix is used to form verbs that indicate repetition or return, such as "redo," "refresh," and "rethink."

Example:

1. All the things they tried and failed, or achieved, we have to **re**do.
2. "To **re**fresh a page, you can click the **re**fresh link on the page"- he said.
3. She decided to **re**think about her decisions.

ge-: This prefix is used to form verbs that indicate a change or transformation, such as "geld," "generate," or "geographer."

Example:

1. According to Domesday, Ashburton was held in chief by Osbern, bishop of Exeter, and rendered **ge**ld[5] for six hides.
2. Set this keyboard to **ge**nerate a scatter plot.
3. A curious notice of this building is found in the Arabian **ge**ographer book.

ver-: This prefix is used to form verbs that indicate a change in direction or position, such as "verge," "vertical," and "verify."

Example:

1. She was on the **ver**ge of crying again.
2. A **ver**tical circle passing through the sun may also be seen.
3. You'll **ver**ify what you saw, right?

en-: is a Germanic prefix that denotes a state of being in or on. It serves to denote a state of being in or on something in many English words.

Examples include:

- *enable*: to make something possible or able to happen
- *encase*: to put something in a case
- *enclose*: to close in or surround
- *engage*: to take part in an activity or conversation
- *enlighten*: to give knowledge or understanding
- *enliven*: to make something lively or more interesting
- *enrich*: to make something more valuable or greater in amount

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[4] Uplift: improvement of a person's moral or spiritual condition
[5] Geld: to remove the testicales of a male horse or similar animal

with-**:** This is a Germanic prefix that denotes a state of association or being with something. It is frequently used in English to denote a state of association or togetherness with something. Examples comprise:

- withdraw: to take away or remove
- withstand: to resist or endure
- witness: to see or be present at an event
- withold: to keep back or refrain from giving
- withstand: to resist or endure
- withdraw: to take away or remove
- withal: in addition to

German Prefixes Used in Technical and Scientific Terminology

Now we'll go over the Germanic prefixes that are used in technical and scientific terminology.

Auto-: this prefix means "self" or "automatic," and it is frequently used in terms related to self-propelled vehicles or machines, such as "automobile" or "autopilot," but it is also used to create words that describe self-propelled things, such as "autobiography."
Example:
1. I was searching for his hanging suit when I heard an **auto**mobile roll up the driveway.
2. A crew member disengaged the **auto**pilot after the second turn.
3. He wrote in his **auto**biography that he was impressed with her beauty.

Bio-: This prefix means "life," and it is frequently used in terms related to biology or the study of living organisms, such as "biosphere," "biochemistry," and "biomedical."
Example:
1. All of the ecosystems in the world make up the **bio**sphere.
2. Research was also carried on and included bacteriology, hispathology, and, later, **bio**chemistry.
3. A study is basically health or **bio**medical related research conducted in people.

Geo-: This prefix denotes "earth" or "ground" and is frequently found in words like "geography," "geothermal," and "geology" that are related to geology or the study of the Earth.

Example:
1. The **geo**graphy of Northern Italy is described in several popular guide books.
2. The **geo**thermal is heat produced by the earth and is natural source of energy.
3. Studying **geo**logy can help teach us the history of the land.

Hydro-: This prefix means "water," and it is frequently used in terms related to water or hydrology, such as "hydroelectric," "hydrothermal," and "hydrocarbon."

Example:

1. The four most common types of renewable energy are solar, wind, **hydro**electric and geothermal.

2. Processes active in **hydro**thermal plumes modify the gross flux from hydrothermal venting to the oceans.

3. The relation between the heat of combustion of a **hydro**carbon and its heat of formation may be readily seen from the examples in the book.

Neo-: This prefix denotes something that is "new" or "modern," such as "neoclassical," "neoliberal," or "neologisms." It is frequently used in terms that describe something as being new or contemporary.

Example:

1. It begins rather in the manner of Eastern European folkmusic, and has a **neo**classical chorale at the end.

2. Basic democratic rights are becoming incompatible with the **neo**liberal agenda, which thereby becomes even more illegitimate.

3. He also joined words together to create **neo**logisms[6].

Tele-: This prefix means "far" or "distance," and it is frequently used in terms related to long-distance communication or transportation, such as "telephone," "television," or "telecommute."

Example:

1. A ringing **tele**phone interrupted us.
2. He has been spending too much time with the **tele**vision lately.
3. In some cases, your boss may be willing to allow you to **tele**commute.

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[6] Neologisms: a new word or expression, or a new meaning for an existing word

The Prefixes' Original Forms and Transformation

The original forms of some of the prefixes we discussed are shown in the table below, along with how they were changed to become the forms we actually employ.

OE	Dutch	German	Gothic	Original meaning
be	be	be	bi	by, around
for	ver	ver	fra, fair, faura	before
full	vol	voll	fulla	full
ge	ge	ge	ga	with
mis	mis	mis	missa	changed, turned
oþ, on, a	ont	ent	anda	against
or, a	er	er	uz	out
to	te	zer	dis/twis	two ways, in two

Conclusion

A specific conclusion cannot be providewd about Germanic prefixes without knowing more about the study's focus and scope. However, some broad conclusions that could be drawn from a study of Germanic prefixes include: Germanic prefixes are important in the formation of words in Germanic languages. These prefixes frequently have distinct meanings and, when added to a base word, can alter its meaning. The use and meanings of Germanic prefixes have evolved over time, with some prefixes becoming obsolete or changing in meaning. Germanic prefixes can shed light on the history and evolution of Germanic languages. Understanding the meanings and applications of Germanic prefixes can be beneficial for students of Germanic languages and those interested in word etymology.

In conclusion, German prefixes play a crucial role in the German language, as they change the meaning of words and help to create new ones. Throughout this project, we have explored various prefixes and their meanings, and how they are used in different contexts. We have also seen how they can make the German language more complex, but also more expressive.

This study also emphasized the significance of understanding prefixes in order to fully comprehend the meaning of German words. Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that prefixes can be difficult to learn and use correctly, but with practice and study, anyone can master them.

Finally, this study only scratches the surface of the vast number of prefixes found in the German language; there is much more left to be studied and discovered on this topic.

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