

NEOLOGISMS FORMED THROUGH AFFIXATION, COMPOUNDING, AND CONVERSION IN ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL DISCOURSE

Guzal Khursanovna Turaeva

Associate Professor, Department of Linguistics, Karshi State University, Uzbekistan

Abstract. The article examines neologisms formed through affixation, compounding, and conversion in English educational discourse. It identifies the structural and semantic features of new units naming educational processes, pedagogical activities, learning technologies, assessment practices, management systems, and participants in education. Descriptive, structural-semantic, word-formation, contextual, and corpus-assisted methods are applied. Particular attention is paid to productive prefixes and suffixes, compound formations, and noun-to-verb conversion. The analysis indicates that compounding is especially active in naming technologies and management concepts, whereas affixation and conversion support the formation of process, participant, and action names.

Keywords: Educational discourse, neologism, affixation, compounding, conversion, word formation, corpus analysis, semantic structure

1. Introduction

The rapid digitalization of education, the redistribution of pedagogical functions, the development of new assessment practices, and the expansion of international educational experience have generated a continuous need for new lexical units. In English educational discourse, affixation, compounding, and conversion function as major means of naming newly established processes, technologies, forms of instruction, management systems, and participants. Affixation creates a new unit by attaching a prefix or suffix to an existing base; compounding combines two or more lexical bases; conversion allows an unchanged form to function as another part of speech. These processes, however, should not be treated as purely formal patterns. A formation gains neological relevance when it denotes a recognizable educational concept, recurs in independent sources, and responds to an actual communicative need.

I. Plag defines an affix as a bound element that forms a new lexeme by attaching to a word base and discusses English affixation in relation to productivity, meaning, base selection, and phonological properties (Plag, 2003, pp. 74–75). His framework is useful for identifying the formal pattern of a new unit, but it is primarily concerned with English word formation in general. It does not specifically address the activation of educational terms under the influence of institutional demand, pedagogical functions, and digital environments. The present study therefore relates formal structure to educational meaning, communicative motivation, and context of use.

F. O'Dell emphasizes that knowledge of productive prefixes and suffixes helps learners infer the meanings of unfamiliar formations (O'Dell, 2016, pp. 97–98). This observation explains the relative transparency of many educational neologisms: a new unit may remain understandable because its base and affix are familiar. Nevertheless, O'Dell focuses mainly on language-learning methodology rather than on corpus frequency, terminological status, or distribution across educational genres. Similarly, L. Bauer, R. Lieber, and I. Plag provide a detailed account of English affixation and compounding, including head structure, stress, spelling, semantic unity, and productivity (Bauer et al., 2013, pp. 219–220, 271–272, 437–438). Their classification offers a solid morphological basis, but the institutional and discursive conditions under which educational formations stabilize require additional consideration.

Comparative studies also underline the specificity of educational naming. M. Nizomova and S. Erkinova observe that compound and multicomponent terms are highly active in English educational terminology, while affixal and analytical patterns are prominent in Uzbek (Nizomova & Erkinova, 2025, p. 13). F. S. Niyazova and Z. Allayarova draw attention to the parallel use of national word-formation resources and borrowed units in Uzbek pedagogical terminology (Niyazova & Allayarova, 2025, p. 150). These studies are important for subsequent cross-linguistic comparison, although the dates of first attestation, corpus distribution, and genre-specific activation of individual English units remain insufficiently described.

The aim of this article is to identify and interpret the structural and semantic characteristics of English educational neologisms formed through affixation, compounding, and conversion. The study addresses three questions: which affixal patterns are productive in naming educational processes and participants; how compounds organize complex technological and pedagogical concepts; and how conversion enables existing nouns to acquire new verbal functions in digital and practice-oriented educational communication.

2. Materials and Methods

The material consists of English educational formations discussed in morphological and terminological studies and attested in contemporary academic, methodological, media, and digital educational communication. The units examined include *reskilling*, *upskilling*, *ungrading*, *microlearning*, *co-teaching*, *re-teaching*, *pre-assessment*, *post-assessment*, *gamification*, *personalization*, *learner-centeredness*, *digitalize*, *credentialize*, *learning analytics*, *peer assessment*, *digital badge*, *courseware*, *homeschooling*, *AI tutor*, *flipped classroom*, *blended learning*, *learning management system*, *to Zoom*, *to badge*, *to credential*, and *to scaffold*. The examples represent educational processes, assessment, instructional technologies, management, qualifications, and pedagogical support.

The study employs descriptive, structural-semantic, word-formation, contextual, and corpus-assisted methods. The descriptive method establishes the formal composition and part-of-speech status of each unit. Word-formation analysis identifies the base, prefix, suffix, component structure, or conversion pattern. Structural-semantic analysis explains how the formal elements contribute to the educational meaning. Contextual analysis distinguishes a genuinely new educational use from an older general-language meaning. Corpus-assisted observation is used to determine whether a candidate occurs in different registers, periods, and combinations rather than only in a single isolated text.

The Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) and the NOW Corpus are treated as supporting sources. COCA allows comparison across academic, journalistic, and other registers of American English, whereas NOW provides continually updated online news material and is useful for observing the media circulation and diachronic growth of recent educational vocabulary (Davies, n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The analysis does not equate repeated occurrence in one publication with broad lexical activation. Relevant indicators include recurrence in independent texts, distribution across years and genres, stable collocations, and consistent educational meaning.

The classification follows three principal criteria. First, the unit must have a structurally identifiable formation pattern. Second, it must denote a specific educational concept or a new educational use of an existing form. Third, the interpretation must be supported by contextual stability rather than by formal possibility alone. Borderline formations such as *e-learning* and *microcredential* are treated cautiously because *e-* and *micro-* may be interpreted either as affix-like elements or as components of compounds. Their classification therefore considers related formations, spelling, stress, semantic unity, and recurrent use.

3. Results

3.1. Affixation

Prefixation contributes meanings of repetition, cooperation, opposition, temporal sequence, degree, and scale. The prefixes *re-*, *pre-*, *post-*, *co-*, *micro-*, *multi-*, *up-*, and *un-* are particularly visible in educational vocabulary. *Reskilling* (*re-* + *skill* + *-ing*) denotes the development of new professional skills in response to changing requirements, whereas *upskilling* (*up-* + *skill* + *-ing*) refers to raising the level of existing skills. The common base *skill* is preserved, while the prefix differentiates the direction of professional development.

In *ungrading*, *un-* does not express simple negation. It denotes the rejection or reconsideration of assessment based primarily on conventional grades and scores. The element *micro-* in *microlearning* identifies the presentation of learning content in small units and short periods. The formations *co-teaching*, *re-teaching*, *pre-assessment*, and *post-assessment* show that formally similar patterns perform distinct educational functions: *co-* signals cooperation, *re-* indicates repetition, and *pre-* and *post-* locate assessment at different stages of instruction. Their semantic transparency facilitates use in new contexts, although a theoretically possible formation should not be regarded as a neologism unless it consistently names an educational concept and is used by independent authors.

Suffixation is active in naming educational processes, participants, properties, and theoretical orientations. English educational formations employ such suffixes as *-er*, *-or*, *-ist*, *-ian*, *-ee*, *-ing*, *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ity*, *-ize*, and *-ify*. *Gamification* is related to the verb *gamify* and names the integration of game elements into learning. The element *-ization* in *personalization* expresses a process, whereas *-ness* in *learner-centeredness* creates an abstract noun denoting a defining feature of a pedagogical approach. In *digitalize* and *credentialize*, *-ize* presents the action as bringing an object or process into a new state. These forms demonstrate the capacity of suffixation to create process and action names, but their neological status depends on chronology and new educational meaning rather than on suffixation alone.

Some units occupy a boundary between affixation and compounding. In *e-learning*, *e-* is a shortened form of *electronic* and does not function independently, although it contributes a stable digital meaning to numerous formations. In *microcredential*, *micro-* denotes limited scope, but it may be analysed as a conventional prefix or as a compound component. Such units require a combined formal and contextual classification.

3.2. Compounding

Compounding combines two or more bases within a single educational designation and is one of the most productive processes in English word formation (Plag, 2003, p. 132). The units *learning analytics*, *peer assessment*, *digital badge*, *courseware*, *homeschooling*, *AI tutor*, *flipped classroom*, *blended learning*, and *learning management system* demonstrate how existing words are reorganized to name new pedagogical and technological concepts. Some are written as single words, some with a hyphen, and others as separate words. Orthographic variation does not remove their lexical unity when the components consistently denote one concept.

The final component commonly functions as the semantic head. *Peer assessment* names a type of assessment, *digital badge* identifies a digital means of recognizing achievement, and *AI tutor* denotes an educational assistant based on artificial intelligence. In *flipped classroom*, *classroom* is the central concept and *flipped* specifies an organization different from the conventional lesson sequence. In *learning analytics*, *analytics* is the head and *learning* identifies the domain of analysis.

Multicomponent units require more than a linear description. In *learning management system*, *system* is the head, *management* specifies its function, and *learning* identifies its field of operation. The internal semantic hierarchy therefore clarifies the concept more accurately than spelling or word order alone. Since many educational terms are written as open combinations, the distinction between a compound term and a free phrase is based on semantic unity, stability of component order, and recurrent corpus use, in addition to phonetic and orthographic features.

3.3. Conversion

Conversion allows an unchanged form to perform the function of another part of speech. Plag describes it as a directional derivational relationship between formally identical units (Plag, 2003, pp. 109–110). Noun-to-verb conversion is particularly active in digital and practice-oriented educational discourse. *To Zoom* develops from the name of a platform and denotes conducting an online meeting; *to badge* means to recognize or certify through a digital badge; *to credential* refers to formally recognizing a qualification or learning outcome; and *to scaffold* denotes providing learners with gradual and structured support.

These verbs compress a longer description into a single action name. Nevertheless, contemporary occurrence alone does not make every converted verb a neologism. Forms such as *to tutor*, *to mentor*, and *to grade* existed before the recent digital transformation of education. Their status must therefore be established by identifying a new meaning or a marked increase in a new educational use.

The direction of conversion is clarified by the semantic relationship between the noun and the verb. *To badge* denotes an action performed by means of a *badge*, while *to credential* denotes granting or formally recognizing a *credential*. In *to scaffold*, a construction noun first acquires a pedagogical meaning and then becomes active as a verb. The formation thus combines semantic transfer with conversion. Contextual analysis is necessary to establish the educational meaning, grammatical behaviour, and object selection of the converted verb.

4. Discussion

The analysis confirms the high explanatory value of the morphological classifications developed by Plag and by Bauer, Lieber, and Plag. Affixation systematically names processes, properties, participants, and pedagogical orientations, while compounding integrates technologies, assessment practices, management concepts, and forms of education into stable designations. Conversion responds particularly well to the need for concise action names in digital educational communication. At the same time, the findings show that formal classification alone is insufficient. Educational meaning, institutional relevance, chronological novelty, and distribution across independent contexts are required to distinguish an established neologism from a merely possible formation.

O'Dell's emphasis on affixal transparency is supported by forms such as *reskilling*, *upskilling*, *pre-assessment*, and *post-assessment*, whose meanings can be inferred from familiar components. However, semantic transparency does not guarantee broad activation. A transparent formation may remain restricted to a single methodological community, whereas a less transparent form may become widespread through institutional adoption or digital media. Thus, morphological accessibility should be examined together with corpus distribution and communicative demand.

The results also support Nizomova and Erkinova's observation that compounds and multicomponent formations are especially active in English educational terminology. The current analysis extends that observation by distinguishing semantic heads and internal relations in formations such as *learning analytics*, *flipped classroom*, and *learning management system*. Their study, however, does not fully establish first-attestation dates or genre-based frequency. Corpus-assisted diachronic work is therefore necessary before the relative productivity of individual patterns can be expressed quantitatively.

Niyazova and Allayarova's account of the interaction between native word-formation resources and borrowing in Uzbek pedagogical terminology is relevant to future contrastive analysis. Once an English formation has been identified as affixal, compound, or converted, its Uzbek representation may be examined as a borrowing, calque, descriptive combination, or nationally adapted equivalent. The present English-focused analysis provides the structural basis for that comparison but does not yet determine the relative success of Uzbek equivalents.

L. A. Samboruk demonstrates that short and rapidly processed forms are active in electronic higher-education communication (Самборук, 2022, pp. 157–158). This principle of linguistic economy helps explain the communicative appeal of *microlearning*, *e-learning*, *courseware*, and *to badge*. Nevertheless, economy should not be equated with brevity alone. A unit is communicatively economical when it expresses a specialized meaning concisely without

creating ambiguity for its intended users. Multicomponent formations may therefore remain efficient when each component contributes necessary semantic precision.

The findings should be interpreted within the limits of the study. The article provides a qualitative, corpus-assisted structural and semantic analysis rather than a complete statistical inventory of English educational neologisms. Claims about absolute productivity require a balanced corpus, normalized frequency, independent-source counts, genre distribution, and diachronic comparison. The present results identify productive tendencies and establish analytical criteria for a subsequent quantitative stage.

5. Conclusion

Affixation, compounding, and conversion are productive means of lexical innovation in English educational discourse. Prefixes distinguish repetition, cooperation, temporal sequence, scale, and revision; suffixes create process, property, participant, and action names. Compounding is especially effective in naming educational technologies, assessment practices, management systems, and instructional models, while conversion transforms the names of platforms, instruments, and concepts into concise verbs denoting educational actions.

The neological status of a formation cannot be determined from structure alone. Reliable classification requires the interaction of formal transparency, educational meaning, communicative need, contextual stability, independent-source recurrence, genre distribution, and chronological evidence. Compounding appears particularly broad in the naming of technological and management concepts, affixation is regular in process and participant naming, and conversion provides a rapid mechanism for verbalizing digital educational practices. These findings create a methodological basis for comparing the formation and adaptation of English and Uzbek educational neologisms in subsequent research.

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