English Morphology

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What is a word?
Word: not a straightforward notion.
The smallest meaningful unit of language is a morpheme.
certain, mean, linguist: free morphemes (they can stand on their own)
-ly, -ing, -less: bound morphemes (they can only be used attached to a free morpheme)

What is morphology?
The subdiscipline of linguistics which studies the internal structure of words, the rules that govern it, as well as the ways of creating new words.

Morphology (1)
- Morphology is normally subdivided into two branches:
  1. Derivational (or Lexical) Morphology
     It studies the means by which existing words have been constructed and by which new words might be created.
  2. Inflectional Morphology
     It studies the way words are adapted in different grammatical contexts. (e.g., making a noun plural)

Morphemes
Word analysis involves breaking a word into its morphemes.
- Literally, the word “morpheme” means “an element in a system of forms.”
- Linguists define it more precisely as the smallest form which is paired with a particular meaning.
We say that each form (i.e., MORPH) plus the meaning linked to it is a single morpheme.

Meaningful units (1)
- How can we identify which part in a word is meaningful and what meaning it has?

SHYNESS
- ‘shy’ = nervous and embarrassed about meeting and speaking to other people.
- It is a meaningful unit, a morpheme.
- ‘-ness’ =?
There is no such a word in English. BUT the fact that there are many words that contain the unit ‘-ness’ makes us think that it might be a morpheme.
To verify this, we should find out if it has a meaning, by paraphrasing different words containing ‘-ness’, in order to see whether it contributes any meaning to the overall meaning of these words.
Meaningful units (2)

- **shyness** = 'the state or property of being shy'
- **loudness** = 'the state or property of being loud'
- **sadness** = 'the state or property of being sad'
- **happiness** = 'the state or property of being happy'

It is a morpheme:
- It cannot be subdivided any further into meaningful components.
- The same thing happens for: dream, shy, loud, sad, happy

Types of Words

- dream
- shy
- happy
- sad
- loud

These words consist of **only one** morpheme.

**MONOMORPHEMIC** or **SIMPLEX** words

- dreamless
- shyness
- happiness
- sadness
- loudness

These words consist of **more** than one morpheme.

**POLYMORPHEMIC** or **COMPLEX** words

Complex Words...

Clearly morphemes and words are not necessarily the same thing. Words may be composed of one or many morphemes. In fact, most long words in English can be broken down into smaller units. The longest word in English (according to Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary) contains 45 letters; it can be broken down into 9 morphemes.

**Morphology vs. Etymology (3)**

- If we compare the paraphrases of words containing ‘-torn’ and ‘-ped’, they do not follow the same pattern as was the case with the morphemes ‘-less’ or ‘-ness’.
- The meaning of these Latin morphemes is not readily traceable.
- It is unclear, from the point of view of today’s English, what the meaning of ‘-torn’ in these words might be.

- These words are etymologically complex, **BUT** they are simplex in today’s English.

**Exercise…**

- Complex or Simplex words?
  - thinker
  - student
  - unfair
  - excellent
  - ugly
  - postmodernist
  - paper
  - classroom
  - trial
  - sadly
  - dogs

  C: think - er
  S: student

- A unit of **meaning** is a unit of **sound**

- Sometimes a single morpheme has several syllables. E.g., English speakers would probably consider the word "hurricane" as a single morpheme.

  (derived from Spanish, which in turn drew the word from Taino, an Arawak language from the Caribbean)

- At other times a morpheme will use **less** than one syllable. *cats* has **two** morphemes in one syllable: ‘feline’ + ‘plural’.
  *cats* has **three** morphemes in a single syllable: ‘feline’ + ‘plural’ + ‘belonging to’.

**Morphemes vs. Syllables (1)**

- Morphemes should not be confused with syllables.
  - a unit of meaning
  - a unit of sound

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**Characteristics of Morphemes**

- Morphemes have four defining characteristics:
  1. They cannot be subdivided.
  2. They add meaning to a word.
  3. They can appear in many different words.
  4. They can have any number of syllables.

**2. Two (or more) forms, one meaning**

- When two different forms have the same meaning, they could be different morphemes, or they might be a single morpheme.
  - Two forms, one meaning = two morphemes
    - There are two situations in which two forms have the same meaning, but they are different morphemes.
    1. The forms are usually rather different from one another: andr → ‘man, male’ as in android
    2. The forms are usually rather similar: vir → ‘man, male’ as in virile
    - Both morphemes mean the same thing, but they are very different in form. They have completely different origins, and we want to think of them as different morphemes.

**1. One form, two (or more) meanings**

- Two different meanings can be expressed using the same arrangement of sounds. Since there are clearly two different and unrelated meanings, we would want to say that there are two different morphemes.
  - The case of ‘in’:
    - in → ‘not’ in words like incapable, insufficient
    - in → ‘into, within’, as in invade, include
  - These similarities are just accidental and typically the origins of the two morphemes are completely unrelated.

**Allomorphs**

- The same morpheme can be realised in different ways.
- The different realisations of the same morpheme are called allomorphs.
  - This is usually the result of phonology interacting with morphology:
    - in-elegant → in-elegant → in-elegant → in-elegant
    - -er, -est, -i- → allomorphs
  - Consider the different realisations of the morpheme (plural):
    - cat > cats → (regular form)
    - mouse > mice → vowel change
    - tooth > teeth → vowel change
    - child > children → vowel change + suffix ‘-en’
    - sheep > sheep → zero morph

**Bases**

- agree
- construct
- cheer
- create
- disagree
- construction
- cheerful
- recreation
- disagreement
- constructional
- cheerfulness
- recreational

- Words in (1) give the bases for the derivatives in (2), which in turn contain the bases for the derivatives in (3).
- However, bases in (1) differ from bases in (2).
- Bases in (1) do not contain any further morphemes, therefore they cannot be analysed into constituent morphemes, unlike bases in (2).
- Bases in (1) are simplex and they are called ROOTS.
- Bases in (2) are complex:
  - ‘disagree’ → dis- agree → 2 constituent morphemes
  - ‘recreation’ → re-, create, -en → 3 constituent morphemes

**Roots, Bases and Stems**

ROOT: The morpheme which lies at the core of a complex word form. Words may have multiple roots.
BASE: Any form (morpheme or word) which enters a word-formation process which yields a more complex form.

The term "stem" is reserved for inflectional processes.
STEM: A form without any inflectional endings.

WINNERS: "winner" is the stem. Also, "WIN" is the root.
WINNER: "WIN" is the root and "win" is (also) the base.
PLAYFUL: "PLAY" is the root of the word and "play" is its base.
PLAYFULNESS: the root is still "PLAY", but the base is "playful".
FAIRPLAY: two roots, "FAIR" and "PLAY".
Types of morphemes (3)

- unhappy
- dislike
- mispronounce
- malnutrition
- management
- motherhood
- cheerful
- settlement

Bound morphemes, such as ‘un-’ and ‘-ment’, which appear only attached to other, usually free, morphemes are termed AFFIXES.

- Affixes attached before the base are PREFIXES.
- Affixes attached after the base are SUFFIXES.
- Affixes can differ in their position with respect to their bases.
- Cases in which the affix is inserted into the base → INFIXES.

In English, inflection generally only happens with swear words such as ‘fan-fucking-tastic’ or ‘also-bloody-lutely’.

Types of morphemes (4)

- Irregular words do not obey the general rules for forming plurals or past tenses. However they are still considered to be made up of the same number of morphemes as if they were regular.
  - sheep → sheep
  - mouse → mice

‘mice’ contains two morphemes as it is made up of the root ‘mouse’ and the idea of plurality, i.e. the morpheme ‘more than one’.

- give → gave

‘gave’ also contains two morphemes as it is made up of the root ‘give’ and the idea of past tense.

Morphological Analysis (1)

**BLENDER**

- It consists of 2 morphemes: ‘blend’ and ‘-er’.
- ‘blend’ is the root and the base to which the suffix ‘-er’ is attached.

**GLOBALISATION**

- It contains 4 morphemes.
  - ‘globe’ is the root and the base, to which the suffix ‘-al’ is added.
  - ‘-al’ is the suffix.
  - ‘-ise’ appears after ‘ globe’, which is the root and base.
  - ‘-ation’ appears after ‘globeal’, which is its base.

⚠️ Spelling changes may occur if affixes are attached to a base.

Morphological Analysis (2)

**UNFEARFUL**

- It consists of 3 morphemes.
- ‘un-’ is the prefix attached to the base ‘fearful’.

- ‘-ful’ is the suffix.

Exercise...

- Morphological analysis: For the following words identify the number of morphemes, all roots, bases and affixes.
  - premodernism: 3 morphemes: premodern, ism
  - civilised: 4 morphemes: civilis, ed
  - demilitarisation: 4 morphemes: demilitar, isation
  - historicity: 3 morphemes: historical, ity
  - minimalis: 4 morphemes: minimal, is, tis
  - recreation: 3 morphemes: recreation
  - removable: 3 morphemes: removable
  - exceptionally: 4 morphemes: exceptionally

Morphological processes

**BAKES**

- They are not two different words, but two different forms of the same word, i.e. bake.

**BAKED**

- They are grammatically fully specified forms of an abstract unit, i.e. bake.

LEXEME

A word as an abstract unit in the vocabulary of a language (e.g. bake).

WORD-FORMS

The different grammatically specified forms of a given lexeme (e.g. bakes, baking, baked).

BAKER vs. BAKES/BAKED

- It is not a word-form of the lexeme bake, but it is a different lexeme.
- As a lexeme, it manifests itself in different word-forms, e.g. baker (sing.), bakers (pl.), baker’s (possession).
Morphological processes (3)

**INFLECTION**
- The morphological expression of grammatical information and categories.
- Affixes used to encode grammatical information and thus to create different word-forms of the same lexeme.
  - 's' in bakes
  - 'ed' in baked
- Such affixes are called inflectional.

**DERIVATION**
- The morphological process for the creation of a new lexeme by affixation.
- Affixes used for the creation of new lexemes, i.e. 'new' stands for 'different in meaning from the base'.
  - 'er' in baker
  - 'ery' in bakery
- Such affixes are called derivational.

Inflectional Affixes

- The inventory of English inflectional affixes is quite small.


Recap on Affixes

**INFLECTIONAL** Affixes
- they encode grammatical information and are used to create word-forms
- they are always suffixes
- they have consistently the same grammatical function of the word they attach to
- they attach to every word of a given class
- they never change the word-class of the base.

**DERIVATIONAL** Affixes
- they create new lexemes
- they can be suffixes or prefixes
- they can have different meanings in different words
- they attach to certain words of a given class
- they can change the word-class of the base.

Exercise...

Identify the type of word-formation process by which the following words have been created.
- ad
- edit
- Chaplinesque
- deorestation
- phone
- blackboard
- NASA
- YMCA
- happily
- flu
- oxen
- goes
- motel
- BACK CLIPPING → ‘advertisement’
- BACKFORMATION → ‘editor’
- DERIVATION → Suffix ‘-esque’ (Adj)
- DERIVATION → Prefix ‘-de’ / Suffix ‘-ation’
- FRONT CLIPPING → ‘telephone’
- COMPOUNDING → Adj + N
- ABBREVIATION (Acronym)
- ABBREVIATION (Initialism)
- DERIVATION → Suffix ‘-ly’ (Adv)
- MIXED CLIPPING → ‘influenza’
- INFLECTION → irreg. plural of ‘ox’
- INCEPTION → 3rd person sing. Present
- BLENDING → motorway + hotel
Exercise...

Derivation with word-class change:
- slow
- memory
- recreation
- glory
- drink
- deliver
- rich
- determine
- love
- power
- happy

slowness Adj → N
memorise N → V
recreational N → Adj
glorify V → N
drinkable V → Adj
delivery V → N
enrich Adj → V
determination V → N
loving V → Adj
powerful N → Adj
happily Adj → Adv

Recap 1

- Morphology
  - Morpheme = form + meaning
  - Bound ≠ free morphemes
  - Bases (simple or complex), roots, affixes
  - Affixes → prefixes, suffixes, infixes
  - Types of morphemes → zero morph, vowel change (allomorph)
  - Morphological analysis
  - Morphological processes → derivation vs. inflection
  - Derivational vs. inflectional affixes
  - Lexemes vs. word-forms

Recap 2

- Word Formation
  - New Root formation
  - Modification
  - Generation
  - Semantic change
    - Generalisation
    - Specialisation
    - Metaphor
    - Shift
  - Inheritance
  - Borrowing → domination, need, prestige
  - Root creation → motivated, ex nihilo

- Folk Etymology
  - Functional Shift → conversion
  - Abbreviation → initials, acronyms, clipping, back formation

- Derivation → affixation
- Compounding → endocentric, exocentric, appositional
- Blending

Exercise...

From the following list of words, identify words with
infectional and derivational morphology.

- elements → l
- gain → free m.
- and → free m.
- unkind → D
- as → free m.
- some → free m.
- case → free m.
- example → free m.
- features → I
- great → free m.
- bad → l
- speech → free m.

Recap 3

- Literature
  - Explore the following words:
    - mismatched
    - televoting
    - rosewater
    - postmaster
    - beloved
    - sang
    - Indo-European
    - (many) sheep
    - inputs
    - economics
    - academically
    - cleverer

- Exercise...

1. mistreatment
   - treat (root) + mis- (derivational) + -ment (derivational)
   - dis-activating
   - psychology
   - terrorized

2. act (root) + -ive (derivational) + -ing (derivational) + -ing (derivational)
   - psych- or psycho (root)
   - 4 terror (root) + -ive (derivational) + FAST (inflectional) if the word is a verb form
   - OR terrorized + terror (root) + -ed (derivational) + -ed (derivational) if the word is an adjective
**Exercise…**
When a compound has more than 2 roots, two of them might form a compound which then combines with a third root to form another compound.

- drop-in center

**Exercise…**
Identify the relations between the elements of the following compounds:
- dual carriageway: dual + carriageway
- disk operating system: disk + [operating + system]
- Dutch elm disease: [Dutch + Elm] + disease
- fair-weather friend: fair-weather + friend
- fine-tooth comb: fine-tooth + comb
- local area network: local + [area + network]
- optical character recognition: optical + [c + r]
- repetitive strain injury: [r + s] + injury

**Exercise…**
Aanlyse the following lexical items: 
**filling stations**

**Root(s):** 
fill, station

**Affixe(s):** 
-ing, -s

**Morphological process(es):**
1 (pres. part.) + D (compound) + 1 (pl)
([fill+ing] + station] + s)

**Word-class:** 
Noun

**Exercise…**
Aanlyse the following lexical items: 
**radio-controlled**

**Root(s):** 
radio, control

**Affixe(s):** 
-ed

**Morphological process(es):**
D (compound) + 1 (past part.)
([radio + control] + (led)

**Word-class:** 
Adj

**Exercise…**
Aanlyse the following lexical items: 
**absent-minded**

**Root(s):** 
absent, mind

**Affixe(s):** 
-ed

**Morphological process(es):**
D (compound) + D (-ed)
([absent + mind] + ed)

**Word-class:** 
Adj
Exercise...
Which part is the combining form (part of a neoclassical compound)?
- meritocracy
- meritocracy ("rule")
- pesticide
- pesticide ("killing")
- neurosurgery ("nervous")
- anglophile
- anglophile ("bond of")
- technophobia
- technophobia ("fear")
- television
- television ("distant")

Exercise...
Which one is the semantic head in the following compounds?
- pinhead
  the head of a pin
- pinhole
  a small hole made with or as if with a pin
- pin money
- money for incidental expenses
- pinprick
  a slight puncture made by or as if by a pin

Exercise...
Which one is the meaning relation between the components in the following compounds?
- bookworm
  One who spends much time reading or studying.
- brainbox
  a clever person
- egghead
  an intellectual, a highbrow
- mastermind
  A highly intelligent person, especially one who plans and directs a complex or difficult project

Identify the inflectional morphemes

Identify the inflectional morphemes
The place fascinated us, as it should have. For this was the kitchen midden of all the civilizations we knew. It gave us the most tantalizing glimpses into our neighbors’ lives and our own; it provided an aesthetic distance from which to know ourselves.
The town dump was our poetry and our history. We took it home with us by the wagonload, bringing back into town the things the town had used and thrown away. Some little part of what we gathered, mainly bottles, we managed to bring back to usefulness, but most of our gewgaws we left lying around barn or attic or cellar until in some renewed fury of spring cleanup our families carted them off to the dump again, to be rescued and briefly treasured by some other boy. Occasionally something we really valued, a passion was snatched from us in horror and returned at once. That happened to the mounted head of a white mountain goat, somebody’s trophy from old times and the for Rocky Mountains, that I brought home one day. My mother took one look and discovered that its beard was full of moths.

I remember that goat; I regret him yet. Poetry is seldom useful, but always memorable. If I were a sociologist anxious to study in detail the life of any community I would go very early to its refuse piles. For a community may be as well judged by what it throws away - what it has to throw away and what it chooses to - as by any other evidence. For whole civilizations we sometimes have no more of the poetry and little more of the history than this (from Wall-Willow 1953: 35-36).

Mandatory Readings
Introducing English Language, Sections A2, C2.
The Frameworks of English, Chapters 3 and 4.
Additional Readings


Possible questions

- Analyse the following words in terms of base, affixes, morphological process(es), word category
- Identify bound and free morphemes
- Identify the morphological process at work