

Morphology

General Linguistics

Oujda Linguistics Club

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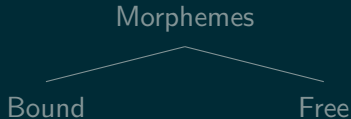
Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words.

The Morpheme is the minimal meaningful unit element in a language.

The lexicon of a language (dictionary) is a list of its morphemes. For each morpheme information is given about its meaning, syntactic properties, morphological properties and pronunciation.

Morphemes



- ▶ **Bound** Morphemes can only ever appear when they are attached. (-s, -ship, re-, un-...)
- ▶ **Free** Morphemes (friend, man, on...)

Morphemes can also be divided into:

- ▶ **Lexical Morphemes:** carry most of the semantic content of utterances.(also called lexemes)
- ▶ **Functional Morphemes** designate grammatical information or logical relations in a sentence. (articles, demonstratives, conjunctions...)]

Root, Base, Stem

- ▶ **Root** is the irreducible core of a word, with absolutely nothing attached to it. It is the part that is always present
- ▶ **Base** is anything into which an affix is added, whether derivational or inflection. (it may have been derived before)
- ▶ **Stem** is that part of a word that is in existence before any inflection affixes have been added. (root + derivational affixes)
- ▶ **Morphologically complex** (or polymorphemic) word is a derived word that has undergone multiple affixation rounds.

Affixation

The most common morphological process for modifying a root is by adding something to it which is referred to as the process of affixation.

Affixation is when a bound morpheme is affixed to a base.

- ▶ **Prefix:** an affix that is inserted before the stem. (*re-play*)
- ▶ **Suffix:** an affix that is inserted after the stem. (*stabl-ity*)
- ▶ **Infix:** is inserted into the root itself. It is well known in Semitic languages like Arabic, and very rare in English.

Derivation vs. Inflection

- ▶ Derivation changes the grammatical category and meaning. Abstract (leadership), Concrete (leader).
- ▶ Inflection mark words for certain grammatical function.

Examples

Derivational affixes:

-ity, -ion, -ship, re-, un-, in-, post-

Inflectional affixes:

-s (plural), -s (1sg 3person), -er, -est, -ed

Morpheme's Relativity

A morpheme performing a particular grammatical function may be free in one language and bound in another. For example, the English infinitive as in “to win the election” is a free morpheme, because it can be separated from its verb by one or more intervening words (e.g. “to very narrowly win the election”). In French, however, the verb “gagner” consists of the root “gagne” and the infinitive bound morpheme “-er”, both the root and infinitive morpheme are bound together in a single word and cannot be split up.

Compounding

Compounding derives a new word by joining two morphemes that would each usually be free morphemes. Compounding may alter the stress position as in: /black 'bird/ and /'blackbird/

(1) [tea]_N+ [pot]_N→ [teapot]_N

(2) [week]_N+ [end]_N→ [weekend]_N

(3) [hair]_N+ [dresser]_N→ [hairstylist]_N

(4) [kind]_{Adj}+ [hearted]_{Adj}→ [kind-hearted]_{Adj}

Affixation Rounds/Cycles

e.g. contradictoriness

root - dict ✓

base - dict ✓ (round₁: prefixation: add contra) → [*contradict*]_V

base - contradict ✓ (round₂: 1st suffixation: add -ory) → [*contradictory*]_{Adj}

base - contradictory ✓ (round₃: 2nd suffixation: add -ness) [*contradictoriness*]_N

- output: [*contradictoriness*]_N ✓

Allomorphy

Morphemes also have **allomorphs**. Allomorphs are different morphs of the same morpheme conditioned by some rule.

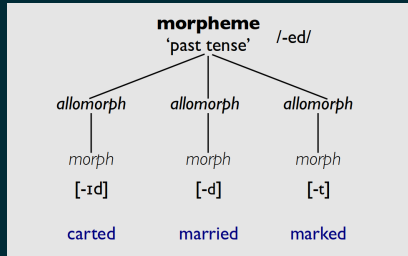


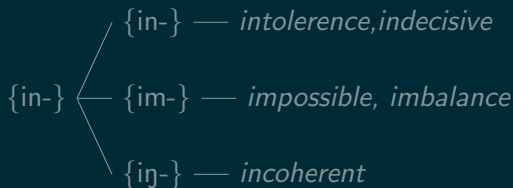
Figure: Simple Example

Types of allomorphy:

- ▶ Phonologically Conditioned Allomorphy
- ▶ Grammatically Conditioned Allomorphy
- ▶ Lexically Conditioned Allomorphy

Phonologically Conditioned Allomorphy

- ▶ Phonologically Conditioned Allomorphy: allomorph selection is conditioned by surrounding phones.



/in-/ → /-im/ / _[-continuant]

Grammatically Conditioned Allomorphy

- ▶ Grammatically Conditioned Allomorphy: a special morpheme may be required in a given grammatical context.

Present Tense	Past Tense
a. walk /wɑ:k/	walked
grasp /grɑ:sp/	grasped
b. weep /wi:p/	wept
keep /ki:p/	kept
c. shake /ʃeɪk/	shook
take /teɪk/	took

Lexically Conditioned Allomorphy

- ▶ **Lexically Conditioned Allomorphy:** depends mainly on the lexicon to identify the variation.

Singular	Plural
a. pen	pens
stop	stops
b. mouse	mice
foot	feet
c. ox	oxen
child	children

- ▶ **Remark:** the cases in c show that for no evident reason the regular rule for the plural fails to apply. The choice of the allomorphs (-en) is lexically conditioned, which means that it is dependant on the presence of the specific (irregular) nouns like “ox, mouse, man, woman”

Non-concatenative morphology

- ▶ A special type of affixation found in Semitic languages.

(5) Arabic

- a. k-**a**-t-**a**-b-**a** 'wrote'
- b. k-**u**-t-**i**-b 'has been written'
- c. **a**-kt-**u**-b 'am writing'

- ▶ Here the root 'write' is a discontinuous string of consonants *ktb*, and vowels are inserted in between them. Different combinations of vowels correspond with different morphemes.