

THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORD: MORPHEME. TYPES OF MORPHEMES

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ANNOTATION: The word "morpheme" consists of two morphemes: "morph" and "eme." The first morpheme "morph" is a free morpheme, meaning it can stand alone as a word with its own meaning. In this case, "morph" refers to form or shape. The second morpheme "eme" is a bound morpheme, meaning it cannot stand alone and must be attached to another morpheme. Bound morphemes typically modify the meaning of the free morpheme they are attached to.

There are two main types of morphemes: free morphemes and bound morphemes. Free morphemes can stand alone as words, while bound morphemes must be attached to another morpheme. Bound morphemes can be further categorized into two subtypes: derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes.

Understanding the structure and types of morphemes is essential for analyzing and understanding the formation and meaning of words in a language.

KEY WORDS: structure, word, morpheme, allomorphs, free, bound, root, content, function, inflectional, derivational, affix, prefix, suffix, infix, morphemic analysis.

The word is a speech unit, used for the purposes of human communication, materially representing a group of sounds, possessing a meaning, susceptible to grammatical employment and characterized by formal and semantic unity.

The external structure of the word is its morphological structure. **For example,** in the word post-impressionists the following morphemes can be distinguished: the prefixes post-, im-, the root press, the noun-forming suffixes -ion, -ist, and the grammatical suffix of plurality -s. These morphemes constitute the external structure

of the word post-impressionists. The external structure of words, and also typical word-formation patterns, are studied in the section on word formation.

The internal structure of the word, or its meaning, is nowadays commonly referred to as the word's semantic structure. This is certainly the word's main aspect. Words can serve the purposes of human communication due to their meanings, and it is most unfortunate when this fact is ignored by some contemporary scholars. The area of Lexicology specializing in the semantic studies of the word is called semantics.

Another structural aspect of the word is its unity. The word possesses both external (or formal) unity and semantic unity. Formal unity of the word is sometimes inaccurately interpreted as indivisibility. The example of postimpressionists has already shown that the word is not, strictly speaking, indivisible. Yet, its component morphemes are permanently linked together in opposition to word-groups, both free and with fixed contexts, whose components possess a certain structural freedom, **For example.** bright light, to take for granted.

A **morpheme** is the smallest unit of grammatical or semantic meaning in a language. A morpheme is distinct from a phoneme because although a phoneme is the smallest meaningful unit of sound in a language, by itself a /p/ or /m/ does not have grammatical or semantic meaning. It must be combined with other phonemes into a morpheme to have such meaning.

Consider the following words: the, boy, runs, and unlucky. The first two of these examples—the and boy—are morphemes because it is impossible to divide them into smaller units of grammatical or semantic meaning. For example, we cannot divide boy into smaller units such as b- or -oy. The same is true of the. The word runs, however, can be divided into two smaller units: run and –s. Each of these has a distinct meaning. Run has the semantic meaning “to move quickly on foot” and –s has the grammatical meaning “3rd person singular present tense verb.” Therefore, runs are made up of two morphemes, run and –s. The word unlucky can be divided into three morphemes: un-, luck, and –y..

There are two primary **types of morphemes**: free morphemes and bound morphemes

FREE MORPHEMES

A **free morpheme** can carry semantic meaning on its own and does not require a prefix or suffix to give it meaning. In other words, it can stand on its own as a word, like the, boy, run, and luck. Each of these morphemes can function independently.

Free morphemes can also broadly be divided into two namely lexical and functional morphemes as discussed below.

. Lexical Morphemes

Lexical morphemes are the meaning bearers of sentences. They serve as carriers of the information being conveyed in a sentence. Lexical morphemes form the open class of words as words belonging to this group are opened to word formation rules, new members of each class can easily be created. They are nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs.

Noun	Verb	Adj	Adv
man	eat	deep	fairly
woman	sleep	ugly	along
boy	drink	nice	deeply
stone	buy	fair	easily
table	smile	certain	quietly

. Functional Morphemes

Functional morphemes show relationship between or among lexical morphemes. Unlike lexical morphemes they do not convey lexical meaning and they



are very few in number. They belong to the closed class as new members are not admitted. They have a high frequency of occurrence and they are reciprocally exclusive. Two members of a class cannot be used together.

They include all functional words like prepositions (on, in, at, under, over, etc.), pronouns (he, she, it, they, her, us, etc.), conjunctions (and, or, but, etc.), determiners (a, an, the, these, etc.), and interjections (ah! oh!, eh!, ughh!).

BOUND MORPHEMES

Bound morphemes cannot stand alone but must be bound to other morphemes, like –s, un-, and –y.

Bound morphemes are often **affixes**. This is a general term that comprises **prefixes**, which are added to the beginnings of words, like re– and un-, and **suffixes**, which are added to the ends of words, like –s, –ly, and –ness. Some languages also have **infixes**, which are added into the middle of words, but these are rare in Modern English. Bound morphemes are further divided into two subtypes: derivational and inflectional morphemes.

Derivational morphemes change the meaning or the part of speech of a word (i.e., they are morphemes by which we “derive” a new word). Examples are un-, which gives a negative meaning to the word it is added to, –y, which turns nouns into adjectives, or –ness, which turns adjectives into nouns.

Inflectional morphemes add grammatical information to the word, such as –s on runs, which tells us that it is 3rd person singular present tense verb, or the –s on boys, which tells us that there is more than one boy. Derivational morphemes: These morphemes are used to create new words or to change the grammatical category or meaning of a word. For example, adding the derivational morpheme “-er” to the verb “teach” creates the noun “teacher.”

There are eight inflectional suffixes, often just called “inflections,” in English:

- -s on verbs: 3rd person sg, present tense (he runs, she walks)

- -ed on verbs: past tense: (I walked, they joined)
- -ing on verbs: progressive (I was walking; they were joining)
- -en on verbs: past participle (I was beaten; she has eaten)
- -s on nouns: plural (boys, books)
- -'s on nouns; possessive (boy's, book's)
- -er on adjectives: comparative (quicker, slower)
- -est on adjectives: superest.

Inflectional morphemes: These morphemes are used to indicate grammatical relationships such as tense, number, case, and comparison. They do not change the basic meaning or grammatical category of a word. For example, adding the inflectional morpheme "-s" to the noun "dog" indicates plurality ("dogs"). Several of these inflections are similar phonologically, but do not confuse them. The -s on the end of 3rd person singular verbs, the -s plural on nouns, and the -'s possessive ending are the same purely by coincidence. Also, do not confuse the -ing inflectional ending used to make verbs progressive ("I am singing") with the derivational morpheme -ing used to make verbs into nouns ("Singing is a fun thing to do"). They sound the same, but they are used differently. Finally, do not let spelling confuse you. We signify possessive plurals in spelling by adding an apostrophe to the end of the word (e.g., boys') but the only inflectional ending here is the s-plural. The apostrophe is just a spelling convention.

CONTENT VS FUNCTION MORPHEMES

There is one final distinction between different kinds of morphemes:

- **content morphemes**, which have a clear semantic meaning (like book, luck, un-, -y, boy)
- **function morphemes**, which include all inflectional morphemes like -s, and -ed, but also include free morphemes such as the, of, with, and, but, and other similar words. These words signify the grammatical relationships between words and give structure to a sentence.

ALLOMORPHS

Allomorphs are non-meaningful variants of a morpheme. For example, the -s plural takes three distinct phonological forms, [s], [z], and [ɪz], in the



words boys [bɔɪz], books [bʊks], and dishes [dɪʃɪz]. These phonological distinctions are considered non-meaningful, making these allomorphs of the -s plural morpheme.

In most cases the morphemic structure of words is transparent enough and individual morphemes clearly stand out within the word. The segmentation of words is generally carried out according to the method of Immediate and Ultimate

Constituents. This method is based on the binary principle, i.e. each stage of the procedure involves two components the word immediately breaks into. At each stage these two components are referred to as the Immediate Constituents. Each Immediate Constituent at the next stage of analysis is in turn broken into smaller meaningful elements. The analysis is completed when we arrive at constituents incapable of further division, i.e. morphemes. These are referred to Ultimate Constituents.

A synchronic morphological analysis is most effectively accomplished by the procedure known as the analysis into Immediate Constituents (IC). ICs are the two meaningful parts forming a large linguistic unity.

The method is based on the fact that a word characterized by morphological divisibility is involved in certain structural correlations. To sum up: as we break the word we obtain at any level only ICs one of which is the stem of the given word. All the time the analysis is based on the patterns characteristic of the English vocabulary. As a pattern showing the interdependence of all the constituents segregated at various stages, we obtain the following formula: un+ gentle + -man + -ly

Breaking a word into its Immediate Constituents we observe in each cut the structural order of the constituents.

A diagram presenting the three cuts described looks as follows:

1. un- / gentlemanly
2. un- / gentleman / - ly
3. un- / gentle / - man / - ly

A similar analysis on the word-formation level showing not only the morphemic constituents of the word but also the structural pattern on which it is built. The analysis of word-structure at the morphemic level must proceed to the stage of Ultimate Constituents, **For example.** the noun “friendliness” is first segmented into the ICs: friend recurring in the adjectives friendly-looking and friendly and ness found in a countless number of nouns, such as unhappiness, blackness, sameness, etc. The IC ness is at the same time an UC of the word, as it

cannot be broken into any smaller elements possessing both sound-form and meaning. Any further division of -ness would give individual speech-sounds which denote nothing by themselves. The 1C friendly is next broken into the ICs friend and “ly” which are both UCs of the word. Morphemic analysis under the method of Ultimate Constituents may be carried out on the basis of two principles: the so-called root-principle and affix principle.

Morphemic analysis is a fundamental concept in linguistics that involves breaking down words into their smallest meaningful units, known as morphemes. These morphemes are the building blocks of words and play a crucial role in understanding the structure and meaning of language. The principles of morphemic analysis provide valuable insights into how words are formed, modified, and classified in different languages. In this comprehensive discussion, we will explore the principles of morphemic analysis, including the types of morphemes, their functions, and their role in word formation.

In conclusion, the word "morphemes" provides a fascinating insight into the structure and types of morphemes that form the foundation of word formation and meaning in language. The word "morphemes" itself is composed of two morphemes: "morph," which is a free morpheme, and "eme," which is a bound morpheme. This word structure exemplifies the two main types of morphemes: free morphemes, which can stand alone as words, and bound morphemes, which must be attached to another morpheme. Furthermore, bound morphemes can be further categorized into derivational morphemes and inflectional morphemes. Derivational morphemes are used to create new words or modify meaning, while inflectional morphemes are used to indicate grammatical relationships such as tense, number, possession, and comparison. Understanding these types of morphemes is crucial for comprehending how words are formed and how their meanings and grammatical functions are modified. The study of morphemes sheds light on the intricate nature of language and enriches our understanding of word formation, meaning, and grammatical relationships. It provides valuable insights into the underlying structure of words and how they are manipulated to convey nuanced meanings and grammatical information. Moreover, an understanding of morphemes is essential for language learners and linguists alike, as it forms the basis for analyzing and understanding the

complex interplay between form and meaning in language. By delving into the structure and types of morphemes, we gain a deeper appreciation for the richness and complexity of language. We come to recognize the subtle ways in which morphemes combine to create an infinite array of words with diverse meanings and functions. Ultimately, the study of morphemes enhances our ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in language, offering a window into the intricate workings of human communication.

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