

Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research

Islamic University

College of Education

Department of English Language



Course Title: Introduction to Linguistics

Stage: 3rd Year

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Lecture Topic: Morphology

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1. Morphology

Morphology is the field of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words. It is the study and analysis of the basic elements of words in language which are called “morphemes”.

2. Morphemes

A morpheme is defined as a minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function, that can't be broken down any further.

e.g.

- (Talk, talks, talker, talked, talking)
 - consist of (one element ‘talk’ + other elements ‘ -s, -er, -ed, -ing’)
 - All these elements are described as **morphemes**.
- The word **renewed** consists of three morphemes. One minimal unit of meaning (new). Another minimal unit of meaning (re = again). And a minimal unit of grammatical function –ed (= past tense)
- The word *tourists* also contains three morphemes: There is one minimal unit of meaning which is *tour*, Another minimal unit of meaning *-ist* (marking “person who does something”); And a minimal unit of grammatical function *-s* (indicating plural).

2.1. Free and bound morphemes.

- Free morphemes are morphemes that can stand by themselves as single words, for examples, new and tour.
- Bound morphemes are morphemes that cannot normally stand alone and are typically attached to another form, exemplified as- re, -ist, -ed, -s .

Notes :

- These Bound morphemes were described in chapter 5 as **affixes**. So, we can say that all affixes (prefixes and suffixes) in English are bound morphemes.
- The free morphemes can generally be identified as the set of separate English word forms such as basic nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs.
- When free morphemes are used with bound morphemes, the basic word forms are known as **stems**.

undressed			carelessness		
un	dress	–ed	care –	less	-ness
prefix	stem	suffix	stem	suffix	suffix
(bound)	(free)	(bound)	(free)	(bound)	(bound)

1.2. Free morphemes: Lexical and Functional

Free morphemes fall into two categories: lexical and functional.

- **Lexical morphemes** are that set of ordinary nouns, adjectives and verbs. that we think of as the words that carry the “content” of the messages we convey.
Some examples are: girl, man, house, sad, long, yellow, sincere, open, look, follow, break. New lexical morphemes can easily be added to the language, so they are treated as an open class of words.
- **Functional morphemes** are a set of functional words in the language such as conjunctions, prepositions, articles and pronouns.
Examples are and, but, when, because, on, near, above, in, the, that, it, them. Because we almost never add new functional morphemes to the language, they are described as a closed class of words.

1.3. Bound morphemes: Derivational and Inflectional

Bound morphemes fall into two categories Derivational and inflectional.

- **Derivational morphemes** are bound morphemes used to make new words or to make words of a different grammatical category from the stem.

For **example**, the addition of the derivational morpheme -ness changes the adjective good to the noun goodness.

A list of derivational morphemes will include **suffixes** such as the -ish in foolish, -ly in quickly, and the -ment in payment. The list will also include **prefixes** such as re-, pre-, ex-, mis-, co-, un and many more.

- **Inflectional morphemes** are bound morphemes which are not used to produce new words in the language, but rather to indicate aspects of the grammatical function of a word. Inflectional morphemes are used to show if a word is plural or singular, if it is past tense or not, and if it is a comparative or possessive form, if it is possessive or not, etc .

English has only **eight inflectional** morphemes illustrated as the following:

1. Noun

-s	plural	e.g. books
-'s	possessive	e.g. The girl's book

2. Verb

-s	3rd person singular simple present	e.g. walks
-ing	present progressive	e.g. walking
-ed	past tense	e.g. walked
-en	past participle	e.g. written

3. Adjective

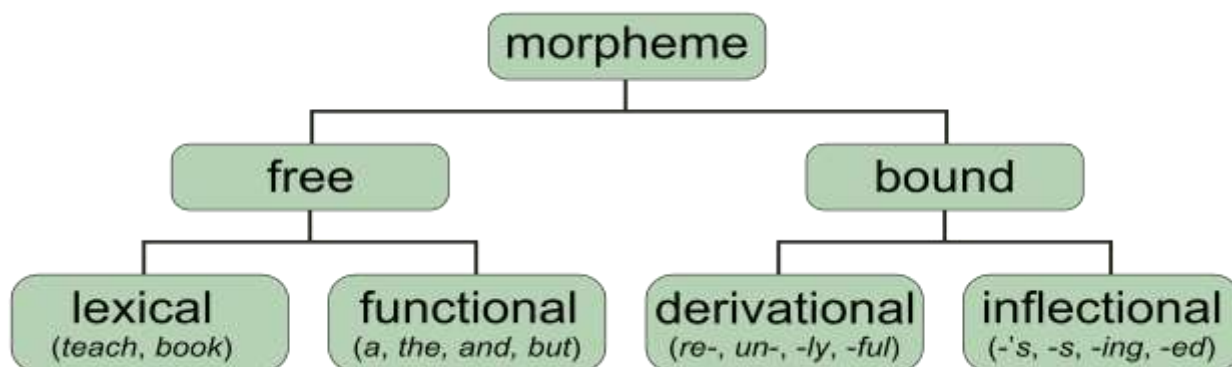
-er	comparative	e.g. taller
-est	superlative	e.g. the tallest

3. Morphological description

Notes:

- **An inflectional morpheme** never changes the grammatical category of a word.
e.g. old, older, oldest are all adjectives
- **A derivational morpheme** can change the grammatical category of a word.
e.g. teach (v.) >> teacher (n).
- **The suffix -er** in Modern English can be an inflectional morpheme as part of an adjective and also a distinct derivational morpheme as part of a noun. Just because they look the same (-er) doesn't mean they do the same kind of work.
e.g. (Famer, colder)
- **Bound morphemes** always appear in order, first derivational then inflectional.
(e.g. teachers)
- Armed with all these terms for different types of morphemes, we can now take most sentences of English apart and list all the “**elements.**”
e.g. (The child's wildness shocked the teachers), we can identify eleven morphemes.

The	child	's	wild	ness	shock	ed	the	teach	Er	S
Functional	lexical	Inflectional	lexical	Derivational	lexical	Inflectional	functional	lexical	Derivational	Inflectional



3.1. Problems in morphological description

The chart presented here conceals a number of problems in the analysis of English morphology. We have only considered examples of English words in which the different morphemes are easily identifiable as separate elements. The inflectional morpheme -s is added to cat and we get the plural cats. What is the inflectional morpheme that makes sheep the plural of **sheep**, or **men** the plural of man? These two words are clearly exception to the general pattern and have to be treated as special cases.

4. Morphs and allomorphs

Morphs are the actual forms used to realize morphemes.

e.g. the form **cats** consists of two morphs, cat + -s, realizing a lexical morpheme and an inflectional morpheme (“plural”).

The form **buses** also consists of two morphs (bus + -es), realizing a lexical morpheme and an inflectional morpheme (“plural”).

So there are at least **two different morphs** (-s and -es, actually /s/ and /əz/) used to realize the inflectional morpheme “plural.”

When we find a group of different morphs, all versions of one morpheme, we can use the prefix ‘allo-’ (one of a closely related set) and describe them as **allomorphs** of that morpheme.

Note that the morpheme “plural” can be attached to a number of lexical morphemes to produce structures like “cat + plural,” “bus + plural,” “sheep + plural” and “man + plural .”

In each of these examples, the actual forms of the morphs that result from the morpheme “plural” are different. Yet they are all allomorphs of the one morpheme.

So, in addition to /s/ and /əz /, another allomorph of “plural” in English seems to be a **zero-morph** because the plural form of sheep is actually “sheep + ø.”

When we look at “**man + plural,**” we have a vowel change in the word (æ→ɛ) as the morph that produces the “irregular” plural form **men.**