

English Morphology

Morphology

the branch of grammar which studies the structure of words.

Morpheme

- a minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function that is the central concern of morphology.
- the teacher restructured the final exam.
- *re-* (minimal unit of meaning standing for *again*)
- *-structur* (minimal unit of meaning)
- *-ed* (minimal unit of grammatical function)

Morphemes are commonly classified into:

- **free morphemes** – morphemes which can stand by themselves as separate words,
e.g. *structure, like, go, work, friend* etc.
- **bound morphemes** – morphemes which cannot normally stand alone but need to be attached to other forms,
e.g. *re-, -ed, -s, -ing* etc.

- unit of meaning which can only exist alongside a free morpheme.

These are most commonly **prefixes** and **suffixes**:

- **un**grateful
- **in**sufficient
- **child**ish
- **good**ness

A handful of examples

- *His un-happi-ness is contagious.*
- *He is talking rubbish.*
- *Stop listening to his disruptive comments.*
- *Oh goodness me! He has unraveled the mystery.*
- *That essay is illegible.*
- *She finds it stressful to keep travelling.*

- A free morpheme is also called **STEM**

Free morphemes

- lexical morphemes:
 - red, house, colour, kitchen, etc.
- functional morphemes:
 - to, near, because, since, as, for, etc.

BOUND MORPHEMES

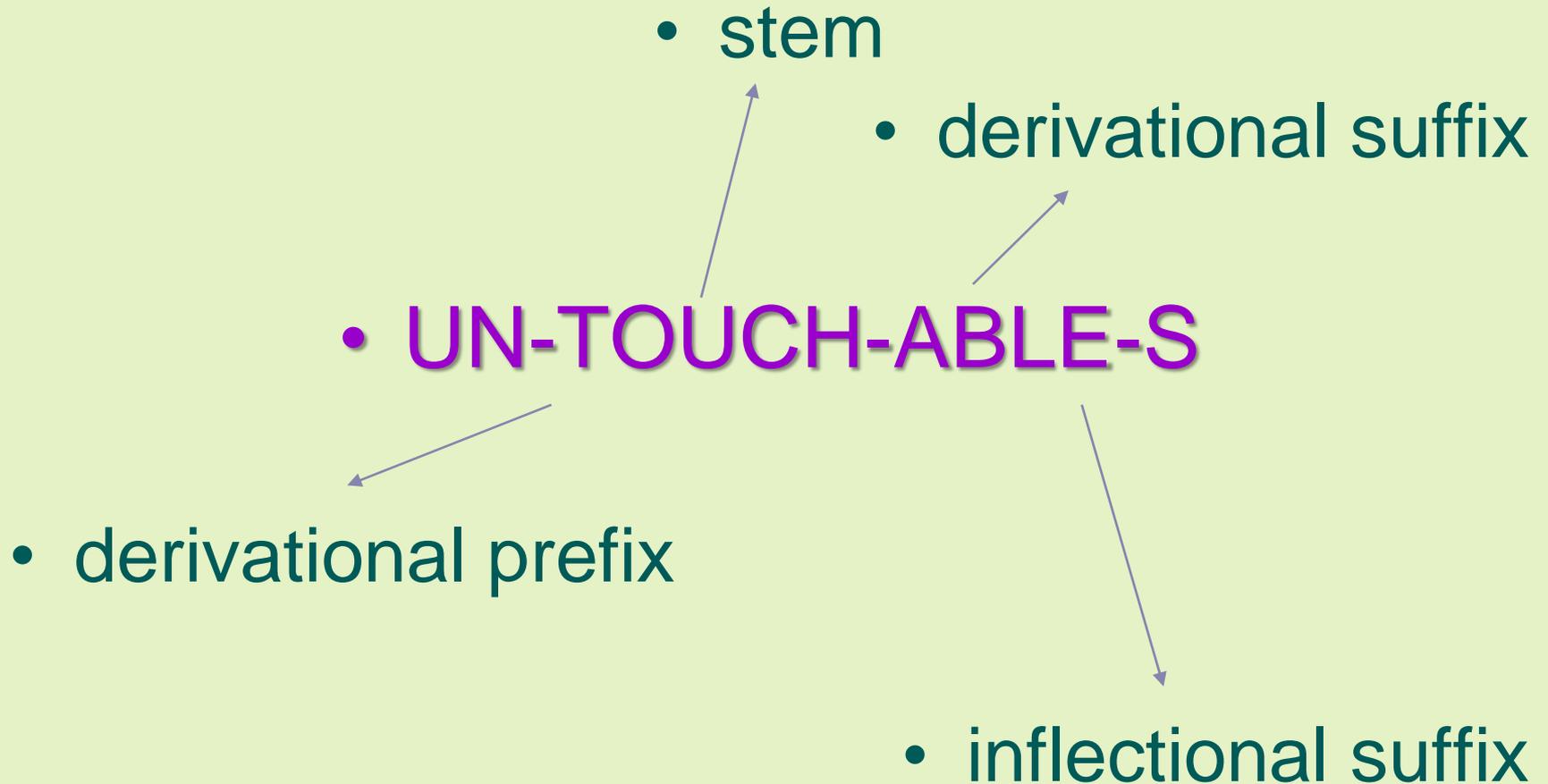
- **Derivational morphemes** are affixes (prefixes or suffixes) that are added to words to form new words (e.g., possible / **im**-possible / **im**-possibil-**ity**).
- **Inflectional morphemes** are suffixes as in -*Sally's daughters* - or - *I wanted it* - they provide grammatical information about gender, number, person, case, degree, and verb form. They are not used to change the grammatical category of a word.

English inflectional morphology

- English has only three categories of meaning which are expressed inflectionally, known as **inflectional categories**. They are **number** in nouns, **tense/aspect** in verbs, and **comparison** in adjectives.

Word class to which inflection applies	Inflectional category	Regular affix used to express category
Nouns	Number	-s, -es: book/books, bush/bushes
	Possessive	-'s, -': the cat's tail, Charles' toe
Verbs	3rd person singular present	-s, -es: it rains, Karen writes, the water sloshes
	past tense	-ed: paint/painted
	perfect aspect	-ed: paint/painted ('has painted) (past participle)
	progressive or continuous aspect	-ing: fall/falling, write/writing (present participle)
Adjectives	comparative (comparing two items)	-er: tall/taller
	superlative (comparing +2 items)	-est: tall/tallest

untouchables
un-touch-able-s



- Though most inflectional morphemes are suffixes, some irregular forms do exist (e.g., *men* is the plural of *man*).
- Some words of foreign origins will have irregular inflections (e.g. curriculum/a, corpus - corpora)

- ...and the *genitive*?

The genitive case

- Not only expressing possession (*the cat's food*)
- The notion of origin (*the traveller's story*)
- A description (*a summer's day*)
- A period is measured (*three months' holiday*)
- Doing the action or receiving the action (*the man's application*)
- Personal and higher animal's nouns (*Hilary's book*)
- Nouns of special human relevance (*my life's aim*)

The of- genitive

- Inanimate nouns (*a part of the difficulty*)
- Titles (*the Duke of York*)
- Some nouns can have both forms....
 - *the ship's name* or *the name of the ship*

How is the plural morpheme realised?

- (1) *witch, horse, wish*
- (2) *wand, professor, injury*
- (3) *rat*
- (4) *ox, goose, tooth*
- (5) *werewolf*

- (1) *witches, horses, wishes*
- (2) *wands, professors, injuries*
- (3) *rats*
- (4) *oxen, geese, teeth*
- (5) *werewolves*

Regular and irregular inflectional morphology

<i>Type of irregularity</i>	<i>Noun plurals</i>	<i>Verbs: past tense</i>	<i>Verbs: past participle</i>
Unusual suffix	oxen, syllabi, antennae		taken, seen, fallen, eaten
Change of stem vowel	foot/feet, mouse/mice	run/ran, come/came, flee/fled, meet/met, fly/flew, stick/stuck, get/got, break/broke	swim/swum, sing/sung
Change of stem vowel with unusual suffix	brother/brethren/	feel/felt, kneel/knelt	write/written, do/done, break/broken, fly/flown
Change in base/stem form (sometimes with unusual suffix)		send/sent, bend/bent, think/thought, teach/taught, buy/bought	send/sent, bend/bent, think/thought, teach/taught, buy/bought
Zero-marking (no suffix, no stem change)	deer, sheep, moose, fish	hit, beat	hit, beat, come

- **MORPHOPHONEMICS/ALLOMORPHY** = the study of the processes by which morphemes change their pronunciation in certain situations.
- **ALLOMORPHS** = the different forms (pronunciations) of a single morpheme. Ex: the plural morpheme in English is {-z}. Its allomorphs are / s /, / z /, / @z /.** Also, the morpheme 'leaf' has two allomorphs: 'leaf' in words built from it (e.g.'leafy') and 'leav-', found only in the plural: 'leaves'.

Word

- The smallest unit of meaning that appears as the headword in an dictionary and therefore can stand alone. It is separated by spaces in written language.
- When we find a unit such as ‘*come in*’, for example, that is a unit of meaning which is longer than a word we use the term lexeme.
- it is very difficult to decide word boundaries in a unit such as ‘*washing machine*’: two words or one?

Lexeme

- A lexeme can be a single word: *walk*, *cat*, *push*
- A compound noun: *washing machine*
- An idiomatic phrase: *seize the day*

words

- A further distinction is made between lexical and grammatical words
- Full words (LEXICAL) mainly ‘carry’ meaning, e.g. *doctor, make, happy*.
- Empty words (GRAMMATICAL) mainly fulfil a grammatical function, e.g. *and, in, to, for, because*.
- A word may be formed by one or more than one morpheme.

- **SIMPLE WORD** = a word consisting of a single morpheme; a word that cannot be analyzed into smaller meaningful parts, e.g. 'item', 'five', 'chunk', 'the'.
- **COMPLEX WORD** = a word consisting of a root plus one or more affixes (e.g. 'items', 'walked', 'dirty').
- **COMPOUND WORD** = a word that is formed from two or more simple or complex words (e.g. landlord, red-hot, window cleaner).

Word formation

- The term refers to the whole process of morphological variation in the constitution of words, including inflection (word variation due to grammatical relationships) and derivation (word variation due to lexical relationships).
- In a more restricted sense, word formation refers only to the latter processes of derivation. But to be more precise we have to distinguish between **derivational processes** and **compositional processes** or **compounding**.

Word formation processes

- *Ways of creating new words*



Coinage

- The invention of totally new terms.
- Often a brand name becomes the name for the item or process associated with the brand name
- **Examples:**
 - hoover
 - Kleenex
 - Xerox
 - Kodak

Borrowing

- Taking over words from other languages.
- Examples from Italian
 - *pasta*
 - *piano* and what else?
- *Loan translation or calque*:
 - If there is a direct translation of the elements of a word into the borrowing language
 - *un grattacielo* (– a skyscraper)

Compounding

- A compound noun is made up of more than one word and functions as a noun.
- They are often written as two words (*e.g. bank account, tin opener, answering machine etc.*)
- Usually the main stress is on the first part of the compound. (*e.g. alarm clock, tea bag, bus stop, etc.*)
- but they can be written also as a unique word:
 - *skateboard, whitewash*

Examples by word class

Modifier + Head = Compound

- Noun + noun **football**
- Adjective + noun **blackboard**
- Verb + noun **breakwater**
- Preposition + noun **underworld**
- Noun + adjective **snowwhite**
- Adjective + adjective **blue-green**
- Verb + adjective **tumbledown**
- Preposition + adjective **over-ripe**
- Noun + verb **browbeat**
- Adjective + verb **highlight**
- Verb + verb **freeze-dry**
- Preposition + verb **undercut**
- Noun + preposition **love-in**
- Adjective + preposition **forthwith**
- Verb + preposition **takeout**
- Preposition + preposition **without**

- In general, the meaning of a compound noun is a **specialization** of the meaning of its head. The **modifier** limits the meaning of the head. This is most obvious in **descriptive compounds**, in which the modifier is used in an attributive or appositional manner.

A blackboard is a particular kind of board which is (generally) black, for instance.

- ***Endocentric compounds:***
 - the whole meaning can be figured out by an analysis of its parts or "morphemes".
 - Ex.: "car-wash".*
 - semantically transparent*
- ***Exocentric compounds***
 - the whole meaning cannot be established by an analysis of parts;
 - Ex.: "hogwash".*
 - semantically opaque*

The words that follow are compounds. For each one, give the meaning of each member of the compound and that of the compounded form. Say whether the compound is semantically transparent or not.

- a. battlefield
- b. scarecrow
- c. churchyard
- d. dogwood
- e. hoodwink
- f. handkerchief
- g. inmate
- h. postman
- i. ladysmock

Blending

smoke + fog = smog

- Blending consists of taking the beginning of the first word and the end of the second word to make a new word.
- Examples: *motel* (motor hotel) *brunch* (breakfast & lunch), *telethon* (television & marathon),
- To describe the mixing of languages we use terms such as *Spanglish* (*Spanish + English*), *Itanglish*, *Cinglish*

Clipping

- The shortening of a polysyllabic word.
 - *facsimile* = *fax*
 - *advertisement* = *ad*
 - *Other examples:*
 - *bro* (< *brother*), *pro* (< *professional*), *prof* (< *professor*), *math* (< *mathematics*), *veg* (< *'vegetate'*, as in *veg out in front of the TV*), *sub* (< *substitute* or *submarine*).

Back formation

- A word of one type (usually a noun) is reduced to a word of a different type (usually a verb) through widespread use.
 - *to donate* from *donation*
 - *to opt* from *option*
 - Other examples: *pronunciate* (< *pronunciation*), *resurrect* (< *resurrection*), *enthuse* (< *enthusiasm*),
- **Hypocorism**: from a longer word we form a single syllable word and add *-y* or *-ie*. (e.g. *television=telly*, *vegetable=veggie*, *moving picture=movie*)

Conversion or category change

- It is a change in the function of a word. Usually from noun to verb

e.g. butter – have you buttered your toast?

Or verb to noun, or verb to adjective:

- Phrasal verbs: *to print out – a printout (noun)*
 - » *to take over – a take over (noun)*
- Verbs: *to see through – a see through top (adjective)*

Acronyms

- They are formed from the initial letters of a set of other words.
- They are usually pronounced as single words (*e.g. NATO, PIN, etc.*)
- Or as a set of letters (*e.g. CD, VIP, etc.*)

Derivation

This is the most common word formation process to create new words.

- **Affixes:**
 - Prefixes (*e.g. dis-*)
 - Suffixes (*e.g. -ness*)

Some derivational affixes of English

AFFIX	Class(es) of word to which affix applies	Nature of change in meaning	Examples
Prefix 'non-'	Noun, adjective	Negation/opposite	Noun: non-starter Adj.: non-partisan
Suffix '-ity'	Adjective	Changes to noun	electric/electricity obese/obesity
Prefix 'un-'	Verb Adjective	Reverses action opposite quality	tie/untie, fasten/unfasten clear/unclear, safe/unsafe
Suffix '-ous'	Noun	Changes to adjective	fame/famous, glamor/glamorous
Prefix 're-'	Verb	Repeat action	tie/retie, write/rewrite
Suffix '-able'	Verb	Changes to adjective; means 'can undergo action of verb'	print/printable, drink/drinkable

Inflectional categories and affixes of English

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Verbs	3rd person singular present	-s, -es: it rains, Karen writes, the water sloshes
.	past tense	-ed: paint/painted
.	perfect aspect	-ed: paint/painted ('has painted) (past participle)
.	progressive or continuous aspect	-ing: fall/falling, write/writing (present participle)
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Derivational Suffixes

Abstract noun makers	Concrete noun makers	Nouns from verbs	Nouns from adjectives
-age = frontage	-eer = engineer	-age = wastage	-ity = falsity
-dom = kingdom	-er = teenager	-al = refusal	-ness = kindness
-ery = slavery	-ess = waitress	-ant = informant	Adjective-noun makers
-ful = spoonful	-let = booklet	-ation = education	-ese = Chinese
-hood = brotherhood	-ling = duckling	-ee = committee	-an = republican
-ing = farming	-ster = gangster	-er = writer	-ist = socialist
-ism = idealism		-ing = clothing	-ite = Luddite
-ocracy = aristocracy		-ment = equipment	
-ship = friendship		-or = actor	

Adverb-makers	Verb makers	Adjectives from nouns	Adjectives from verbs
-ly =quickly	-ate = orchestrate	-ed = pointed	-able = drinkable
-ward(s) = onwards	-en = ripen	-esque = burlesque	-ive = attractive
-wise = clockwise	-ify = certify	-ful = successful	
	-ize/ise = advertise	-(i)al = accidental	
		-ic = atomic	
		-ish = foolish	
		-less = careless	
		-ly = friendly	
		-ous = ambitious	
		-y = hairy	

noun Suffixes

ROOT	SUFFIX	WORD
EMPLOY AGREE	-ment	EMPLOY-MENT AGREE- MENT
DISCUSS PRODUCE PERMIT	-ion, tion, sion	DISCUSS-ION PRODUC-TION PERMI-S-SION
INVITE OPPOSE	- ation, - ition	INVIT – ATION OPPOS – ITION
PREFER DISTANT	-ence, - ance	PREFER- ENCE DISTAN- CE
CERTAIN SECURE	- ty, - ity	CERTAIN-TY SECUR- ITY
SAD ILL	-ness	SAD-NESS ILL-NESS
BUILD UNDERSTAND	- ing	BUILD-ING UNDERSTAND-ING

Nouns for People

SUFFIX	ROOT	WORD
- er, -or, - ress	Drive Edit Wait	DRIV-ER EDIT-OR WAIT-RESS
-ist	Tour Science	TOUR-IST SCIENT-IST
- ant , - ent	Assist Study	ASSIST-ANT STUD-ENT
-an, - ian	Republic Electric	REPUBLIC-AN ELECTRIC-IAN
- ee	Employ Examine Address	EMPLOY-EE EXAMIN-EE ADDRESS-EE

Forming Adjectives

-y	added to the names of common substances, objects and things that are experienced	Rock = ROCKY (full of rocks, like rocks) Noise = NOISY (producing noise)
-ly	Added to time words and to certain family/personal words	Day = DAILY Week= WEEKLY Man = MANLY
-ful	Added when it indicates in a positive way the presence of a quality or ability	Use = USEFUL Skill = SKILFUL
-less	Negatively suggests the absence of a quality or ability	Use = USELESS Meaning = MEANINGLESS
- al	Added to certain nouns of Latin origin ending in –ion, -ic(s) and -ure	Addition = ADDITIONAL Music = MUSICAL Ethics = ETHICAL Nature = NATURAL

TO SUM UP...

Words can often be divided into morphemes. Words can have prefixes, infixes, suffixes, show inflectional or derivational morphology, and much more...

'Morphology is the study of the rules governing the formation of words.'

Practice...

Identify the morphemes for each of the following words, in the order that they appear in the word.

- Inputs
- Components
- Elements
- Indo-European
- Persian
- Within
- Another
- notable

Identify the inflectional and derivational morphemes

elements

gain

and

unkind

as

some

case

example

feature

great

have

linked

Indo-European

speech

egg

ordering

one

morphology

Persians

killed

such

cram

tend

the

these

thought

within

off

This is an exercise in English derivational morphology. Analyse the following words into root and derivational affix. Identify the function of each affix, the grammatical category of the root and that of the derived word.

- a. defamation
- b. childish
- c. lioness
- d. encircle
- e. resentful
- f. disability
- g. untruthful
- h. disagreement

Exercise: Word Formation Processes

- supply three more English words that exemplify each of the above word formation processes. A dictionary will be of some help. You will probably not be able to find examples of backformation; this requires knowledge of the history of words that would be very difficult to track down without a lot of extra work. Skip this category.