



# Types of morphemes: Roots, Affixes, Stems, Bases

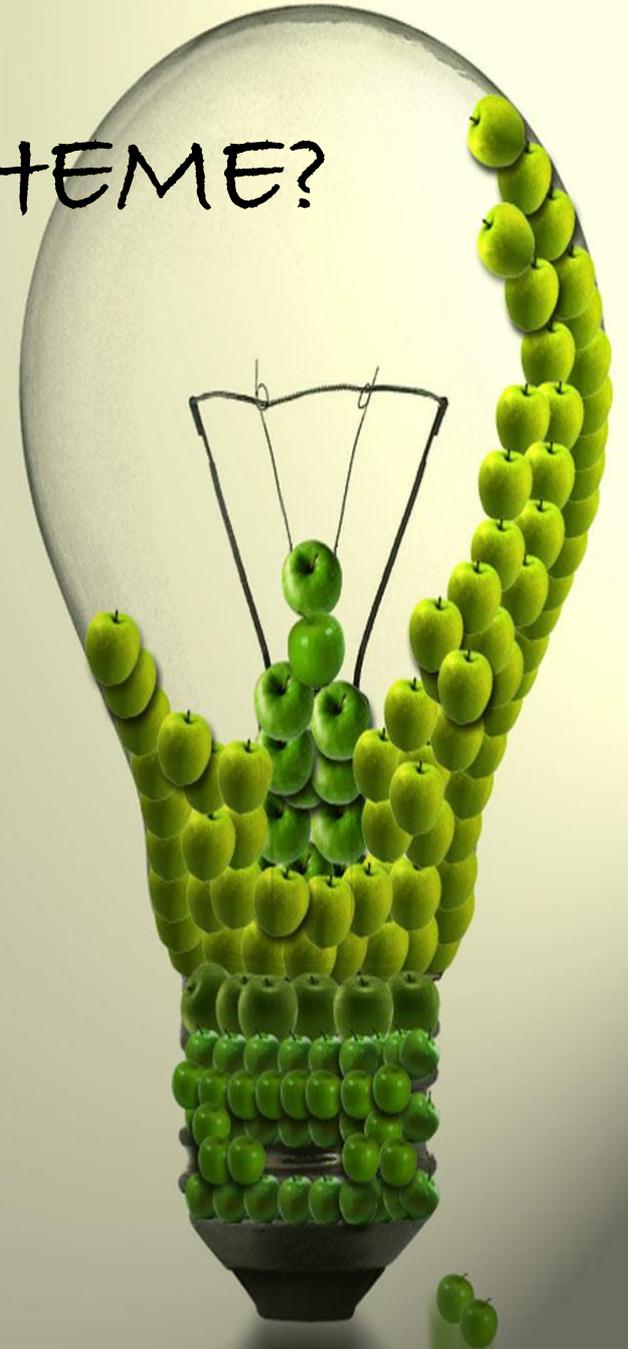
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# WHAT IS MORPHEME?

- The basic unit of morphology is the morpheme. A morpheme can be described as a set of equivalent morphs, ie. linguistic units that can not be dissected into smaller units and can thus be glossed 'smallest meaningful units'.



# Semantic classification of morphemes

1. **Root-morphemes (radicals)** - the lexical nucleus of words, which has an individual lexical meaning shared by no other morpheme of the language:

*rewrite, hopeful, disorder*

***write hope- -order***

The root-morpheme is isolated as the morpheme common to a set of words making up a word-cluster:

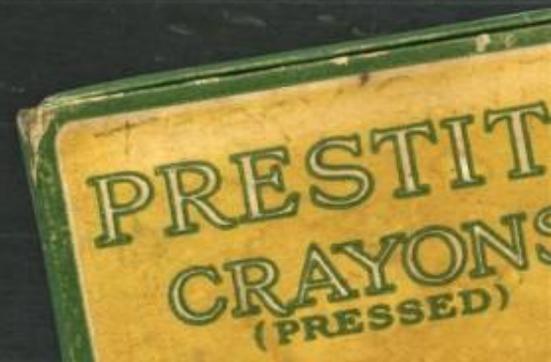
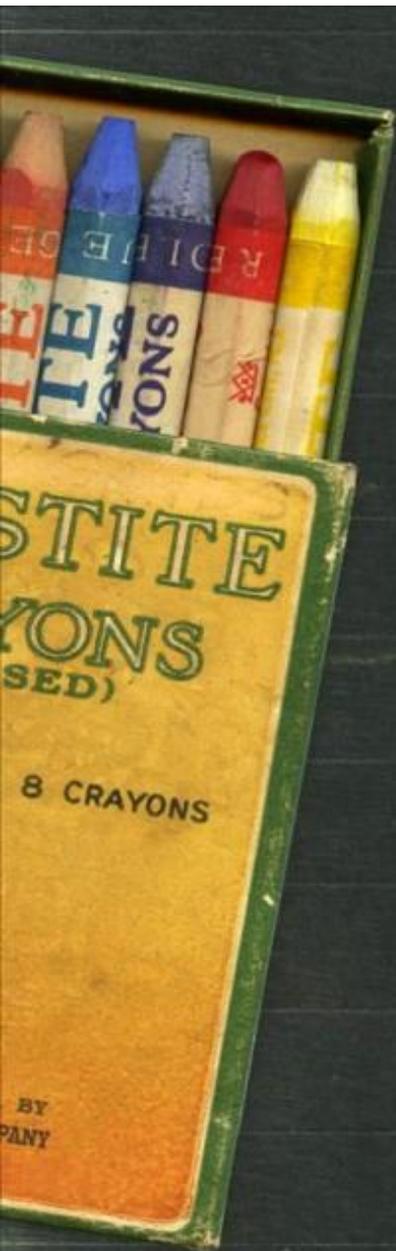
***work-*** in ***to work, worker, working*** or

***theor-*** in ***theory, theorist, theoretical***, etc.

2. **Non-root morphemes** include inflectional morphemes (inflections) and affixational morphemes (affixes).  
Inflections carry only grammatical meaning.  
Lexicology is concerned only with affixational morphemes.

# Root

A root is the base form of a word which cannot be further analysed without total loss of identity. It is that part of the word left when all the affixes are removed.



# Stem

- A stem is that part of a word to which **grammatical** affixes are added. It may consist -amongst others
- a) solely of a single root morpheme (i.e. a simple stem as in *dog*)
- b) two root morphemes (i.e. a compound stem, as in *blackbird*)
- c) root morpheme plus a derivational affix (i.e. a complex stem, as in *unscrew*)
- a):*cats*: single root morpheme: *cat*+ inflectional suffix –s
- b):*crowbars*: two root morphemes (*crow + bar*) + inflectional suffix –s
- c):*inventions* : root morpheme *invent*+ lexical suffix *-ion* + inflectional suffix -s

# Affixes

- *The term 'affix' is a collective term for the types of morphemes that can only be used in combination with other morphemes -ie for bound morphemes. Depending on the position where the affix is attached we can differentiate between*
- **Prefix.** *A prefix is an affix precedes a base: un-tidy, dis-honest, ir—regular*
- **Suffix.** *A suffix is an affix which follows a base: dog-s, kick-ed, national—ise*
- **Infix.** *An infix is an affix which is added within a base. Infixation is not a morphological process in English. Compare German stand - stehen.*
- **Circumfix.** *A circumfix is an affix which spans a base. Circumfixation is not a morphological process in English. Compare Berber amdakul: tamdakul: "friend" / t-amdakul -t "friend (Fem)"*

# BASE

- Every form to which an affix can be added is a base. Every root and every stem is a thus a base. The set of bases, however, is **larger** than the union of all roots and stems, because the process of affixation applies **recursively**.
- **EXAMPLE:** *untouchable* Lexical prefix *un-* + *touchable*. *touchable* is not a root (it is complex, consisting of the root *touch* + lexical suffix *-able*). *touchable* is not a stem, either -it is not an inflectional form.



**Base.** Any structure to which an affix may be added

**Stem.** Any base to which a grammatical affix may be added

**Root.** Morpheme on which the rest of the word is built

**Grammatical affix** adds grammatical meaning to the meaning of the stem it is attached to

**Lexical affix** forms separate lexemes by being attached to a base

Just for fun =)



**“We finally agreed to disagree about agreeing to the agreement that we disagreed about before we agreed we would agree, prior to disagreeing to change the part that we agreed not to disagree on when we agreed to the disagreeable part of the agreement. But they want it in writing.”**