

October 20, 2003

## CLASS 1: WORDS, WORDS, WORDS

### OVERVIEW

In the first part of *MASOE*, we will be dealing with morphology, the theory of **word formation**. Naturally, the definition of a word will be very important and we will also learn how words break down into smaller units, **morphemes**. We will look at the word along the following lines:

- words as **units of meaning** vs. **units of sentence structure** (classes 1, 5, 7)
- words as **pronounceable entities** vs. **abstract entities** (classes 2, 3, 4)
- **inflectionally related** vs. **derivationally related** word forms (classes 3, 4)
- distinction between **compound words** and **phrases** (classes 5, 7)
- the relation between **internal structure** of a word and **its meaning** (class 7)
- **productive** vs. **unproductive** word-formation processes (class 8)
- historical aspects of English word formation: **Germanic** vs. **Romance** (class 9)
- the **role of phonology/sound system** in word formation (classes 1, 10)

### WHAT'S A WORD?

H1: unpredictable: something that must be listed in a dictionary

H2: building blocks: they are used to form phrases and sentences

Some problems:

- **non-words** (bigger than “just a word”: idioms, collocations, proverbs)
- **type vs. token** (what exactly *is* listed in a dictionary or stored in the lexicon?)
- **predictability** (onomatopoeia, sound symbolism, some word formation processes)

Further issues:

- **arbitrariness** (Lexicon: stores label, phonology/sound, semantics/meaning)
- **complex vs. simple words** (what's the difference between *teacher* and *fish*?)
- **compositionality** (meaning is composed: phrases/syntax vs. words/morphology)
- **phonotactics** (if *teacher* contains *teach*, why isn't there *\*spit* < *pit* or *\*chef* < *cook*?)

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### Further readings:

Aronoff, M. (1976) *Word Formation in Generative Grammar*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lieber, R. (1992) *Deconstructing Morphology: Word Formation in Syntactic Theory*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Di Sciullo, A.-M. & E. Williams (1987) *On the Definition of Word*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Selkirk, E. (1982) *The Syntax of Words*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

### Readings for next class:

📖 Carstairs-McCarthy 2002: Chs. 3-4 (pp. 16-43)