

September 7, 2004

## CLASS 1: INTRODUCING MORPHOLOGY — WORDS

### OVERVIEW

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

- **words**: units of meaning vs. units of sentence structure, pronounceable vs. abstract entities
- **word classes**: lexical vs. functional categories, verbal morphology, inflectional classes
- **building words**: morphemes, morphological processes, compounds, clitics, allomorphy
- **morphology across languages**: agglutinative, morphological operations, other funky stuff

### 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.  
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