

September 13, 2005

CLASS 3: WORDS AND LEXEMES

WHAT'S A WORD?

Words form **word classes**: noun — verb — adjective — adverb (lexical categories).
And in addition we'll have to assume functional categories — **but is that all...?** No!

Hypothesis 1:

The meaning of words is unpredictable: Words must be listed in a dictionary.

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)

Hypothesis 2:

Words are building blocks: Words are used to form phrases and sentences.

More problems:

- **what is syntax?** (syntactic argumentation turns out to be circular)
- **free forms vs. bound forms** (“Whose book is this? — Mine / *My.”)
- **occurrence** (example from the musical *Camelot*, Queen Guenevere’s song)

(1) It’s May, it’s May, the month of “yes you may”
The time for every frivolous whim, proper or **im-**

...

When all the world is brimming with fun, wholesome or **un-**

A phonological definition?

- **word = domain of stress assignment** (but stress readjustment: Modern Greek)
- **more generally, clitics and function words wouldn’t count as words** (unstressed)

(2) *o ánthropos* — *o ánthropòs mas*

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*?)

Moral of the story:

*We know a word when we see one: **the grammatical / morphosyntactic word.***

EMPIRICAL TESTS FOR WORDHOOD

- **fixed order of elements:** *unrecognizable* — **ablerecognizun* — **unablerecogniz*
- **non-separability:** words cannot be broken up by segmental or phrasal material
- **integrity:** syntactic processes (e.g. movement) cannot apply to pieces of words
- **compounds** must then consist of a single word (non-separability and integrity)
- **stress** also gives us a clue as to whether we're dealing with one or more words

TYPES OF WORDS**Phonological Word:**

A phonological word can be defined as a string of sounds that behaves as a unit for certain kinds of phonological processes, especially stress or accent.

Clitics are phonologically dependent on adjacent words (**hosts**) and can precede the host (**proclitic**) or follow it (**enclitic**): syntactically they pattern like distinct words, but phonologically they cannot stand alone and need to be incorporated into the prosodic structure of the host — cf. English 's, 'm, 're, -n't, but also function words...

Another useful distinction of words is that of **content words** vs. **function words**.

Lexeme:

A lexeme is a word with a specific sound and a specific meaning; its shape may vary depending on syntactic context,

(keywords: **paradigm** — **homophone** / **homonym** — **citation form** — **lexical stem**)

WORD-FORMATION PROCESSES

- **inflection** vs. **derivation** (word formation / lexeme formation)
- **item-and-arrangement** vs. **item-and-process** (concatenation — tone)
- **lexicon**