

September 8, 2006

## CLASS 2: MORPHEMES & MORPHOLOGICAL PHENOMENA

### MORPHEMES

**Morphemes** are the smallest linguistic elements capable of having a meaning or grammatical function. They have no internal structure other than phonological.

- (1) Everyone's expectations of a wonderfully overproductive semester will be absolutely met by the instructor with the highest imaginable enthusiasm.
- (2) *cran-berry*
- (3) *consume, presume, subsume, resume, assume*
- (4) a. *converge, contend*                      (5) a. *consumption*  
 b. *preserve, pretend*                      b. *presumption*  
 c. *submerge, subtend*                      c. *subsumption*  
 d. *reflect, retract*                          d. *resumption*  
 e. *affirm, adduce*                            e. *assumption*
- (5) *con-/?pre-/sub-/re-/as-summptive* — *con-/pre-/\*sub-/\*re-/?as-summptuous*

**Free morphemes** can occur as independent words, **bound morphemes** cannot.

- (6) a. *re-act-iv-at-ion time schedule*
- b.  $[_2 [{}_1 [{}_{IV} [{}_{III} \text{re} [{}_{II} [{}_I [ \text{act} ] \text{iv} ]_I \text{at} ]_{II} ]_{III} \text{ion} ]_{IV} [ \text{time} ] ]_1 [ \text{schedule} ] ]_2$
- c.
 

$\begin{array}{c} \text{re-act-iv-at-ion time schedule} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{[ reactivation time ]} \quad \text{schedule} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{re-act-iv-at-ion} \quad \text{time} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{re-act-iv-at} \quad \text{ion} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{re} \quad \text{activat(e)} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{activ(e)} \quad \text{at(e)} \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{act} \quad \text{iv(e)} \end{array}$	<p>compound 2</p> <p>compound 1</p> <p>derivation IV</p> <p>derivation III</p> <p>derivation II</p> <p>derivation I</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

## AFFIXES AND BASES

**Affixes** attach to **bases** and the most embedded part in a complex word is the **root**; derived bases are **stems**. Note that while **all affixes are bound** (bound morphemes), **not all roots are free** morphemes; some must be bound as well (such as \**cran*, \**gorm*).

- (7) 'reconsideration'
- re-**consider**-ation
  - re-con-**sider**-at(e)-ion
  - re-**consider**-at(e)-ion
- (8) a. 'disagreement': dis+agree+ment  
 b. dis-**agree** → dis-agree-ment  
 c. **agree**-ment → dis-agree-ment
- (9) a. **leg**-ible, **aud**-ience, **magn**-ify (associated with **Romance roots**)  
 b. **cran**-berry, **huckle**-berry, **gorm**-less (i.e. the "**cranberry morphemes**")

• **roots belong to lexical categories** (i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, prepositions)

- (10) a. *care* (verb, root) – careful (adjective)  
 b. *careful* (adjective, stem) – carefulness (noun)

**Prefixes** precede a base, **suffixes** follow it. In languages other than English, there are also **infixes**, which break up a base (possibly English intensifiers like *-friggin'* – as in *unbefrigginlievable*), and **circumfixes**, which surround it (*en*-BASE-*en* for *enlighten*?).

**Inflectional affixes** don't change a base's category but simply specify it for the inflectional property (person, number, gender or Case as well as tense, for example).

- (11) markings for person, number, gender, case, tense (aspect, voice, mood)...

**Derivational affixes** may (but need not) change the category and create a new word.

- (12) a. de+, re+, sub+, in+, con+, pre+, en+, be+... primary prefixes  
 b. +ion, +ity, +y, +al, +ic, +ate, +ous, +ive... primary suffixes
- (13) a. de#, re#, sub#, un#, non#, semi#, anti#... secondary prefixes  
 b. #ness, #less, #hood, #ful, #ly, #y, #like... secondary suffixes

*What is a word?* As a follow-up on last class, consider a word the **smallest free form** found in a language. (And yes, we can still distinguish **simple** from **complex** words.)

[We'll also discuss the **word formation processes** *suppletion*, *conversion*, *compounding*.]

## ALLOMORPHY

Morphemes may come in **more than one form**:

- (14) a. hand-s, dog-s, nun-s [z]  
 b. cat-s, dock-s, trap-s [s]

The **plural morpheme** -s is pronounced differently in (14a) and (14b).

Question: Are we dealing with the **same or two different morphemes**?

Answer: It is **one morpheme with two different realizations** depending on the **phonological environment**.

It is [-s] after [t], [k], [p] and [z] after [d], [g], [n] — what is it that makes these two sets different? The phonological environment: **one is [-voice], the other [+voice]**.

- (15) a. [Z] → [s] / [-voice] \_\_\_\_  
 b. [Z] → [z] / [+voice] \_\_\_\_

**Vowels** can be said to be inherently voiced, so they take the [z]-realization as well:

- (16) day-s

One further possibility of realizing the plural morpheme is **after sounds like [s], [z]**:

- (17) bus-es, box-es, maze-s [ɪz] (or [ɛz])

- (15) c. [Z] → [ɪz] / [coronal, fricative] \_\_\_\_

The rule in (15c) should actually **apply before** those in (15a,b). Why? Because if in the case of *bus* for example, where -s is [-voice], we apply the rule in (15a) that would give us the plural morpheme -s only, so we have no way of accounting for the presence of [ɪz]. In other words, we'll get the wrong result. (Some sibilants are a subset of all voiceless consonants; more on Mondays and Thursdays at 12 o'clock...)

- (18) *Allomorphic English plural rule*  
 [Z] → [ɪz] / [coronal, fricative] \_\_\_\_  
           [s] / [-voice] \_\_\_\_  
           [z] / [+voice] \_\_\_\_

The three different realizations of the plural morpheme [Z] are called **allomorphs**.

In cases **allomorphs are predicted by the phonological environment** (relevant for the relation between morphology and phonology, which we won't deal with here).

Something very similar can be said for the **past tense morpheme** -ed: [ɪd / ɛd], [d], [t].

But not only phonology determines allomorphy: **lexicon** and **grammar** do as well.

- (19) a. laugh, cliff — laughs, cliffs [s]  
 b. wife, loaf — \*wives, \*loafs \*[s]  
 c. — wives, loaves [z]

- (20) *my wife's job* → 's: [s]

It looks like the “word” *wife* comes in two allomorphs: **free wife** and **bound wive**.

Lastly, it must be pointed out that although intuitive, **correlating morphemes with meaning** is not (always) accurate. (Recall from last class the possible definition “Morphemes are the smallest unit pairing sound and meaning.”) We defined morphemes in terms of meaning **or** function — and we did this for a good reason:

- (21) a. return, restore... [rɪ], [rɛ]  
 b. re-turn, re-store... [rɪ], \*[rɛ]
- (22) a. involve, revolve  
 b. #involution / involvement, revolution / \*revolvement

#### SUPPLETION AND CONVERSION

**Regular inflection** may come in different allomorphs of one underlying inflectional morpheme. **Irregular inflection**, in contrast, is often an instance of **suppletion**: *distinct roots that stand in suppletive relationship as representatives of one lexeme*.

- (23) a. pianist-**s**, ox-**en**, formul-**ae**, cact-**i** (suppleted affix)  
 b. go – **went**, be – **was** (full suppletion)  
 c. can – **could**, think – **thought** (partial suppletion)

Since we're not dealing with **roots**, it's easier to use ‘**suffix**’ rather than ‘morpheme’.

- (24) a. foot – **feet**, see – **saw** (apophony / internal change / ablaut)  
 b. film-**shmilm**, goal-**shmoal** (reduplication)

Affixes attach to roots or stems and form new words — *better*: **they attach to bases**. Sometimes we may not see an overt morpheme, in which case we speak of **zero-derivation** — this process or type of word formation is also called **conversion**:

- (25) *cut* (N) – *cut* (V); *fish* (N) – *fish* (V)

Note: Children frequently produce novel zero-derivation.