

January 25 & 29, 2008

CLASS 2–3: MORPHEMES & ALLOMORPHY

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*
 b. *preserve, pretend*
 c. *submerge, subtend*
 d. *reflect, retract*
 e. *affirm, adduce*
- (5) a. *consumption*
 b. *presumption*
 c. *subsumption*
 d. *resumption*
 e. *assumption*
- (6) *con–/?pre–/sub–/re–/as–sumptive* — *con–/pre–/*sub–/*re–/?as–sumptuous*

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

- (7) 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.

re-act-iv-at-ion	time	schedule	compound 2
[reactivation time]			
re-act-iv-at-ion	time		compound 1
re-act-iv-at-ion	ion		derivation IV
re-act-iv-at-ion	activat(e)		derivation III
re-act-iv-at-ion	activ(e)	at(e)	derivation II
re-act-iv-at-ion	act	iv(e)	derivation I

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*).

- (8) 'reconsideration'
- re-**consider**-ation
 - re-con-**sider**-at(e)-ion
 - re-**consider**-at(e)-ion
- (9) a. 'disagreement': dis+agree+ment
 b. dis-**agree** → dis-agree-ment
 c. **agree**-ment → dis-agree-ment
- (10) 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)

- (11) 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).

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

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

- (13) a. de+, re+, sub+, in+, con+, pre+, en+, be+... primary prefixes
 b. +ion, +ity, +y, +al, +ic, +ate, +ous, +ive... primary suffixes
- (14) 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**:

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

The **plural morpheme** -s is pronounced differently in (15a) and (15b).

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 is [+voice]**.

- (16) a. [Z] → [s] / [-voice] ____
 b. [Z] → [z] / [+voice] ____

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

- (17) day-s [z]

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

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

- (16) c. [Z] → [ɪz] / [coronal, fricative] ____

The rule in (16c) should actually **apply before** those in (16a,b). Why? Because if in the case of *bus* for example, where -s is [-voice], we apply the rule in (16a) 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, as you may remember from phonology classes...)

- (19) *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].

