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MORPHOLOGY

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It is mainly to account for such forms that linguists set up the category of morpheme. Morphemes are defined as the smallest elements that have meaning, or that perform a grammatical function. It is immediately clear that this definition will include a large number of forms so far defined as words e.g. old, young, sweet, a the, was, can, may, etc. though the category 'morphone' was obviously not necessitated by forms like –al, -s, -ed, -ing, etc. which are the smallest elements (it they cannot be broke down further) that have meaning (-al) or perform a grammatical function.

The term "Morphology' was originally used in biology. Since the middle of the 19th century, it has been used by linguists. It analyzes the basic 'elements' which are used in a language.

Morphology, in simple terms, is the study of the internal structure of words. Words, in any language, possess certain features. A number of elements are involved in the making of words. Morphology refers to the study of the internal structure of words.

The Collins English Dictionary defines morphology as the study of the form and structure of words in a language especially in the consistent pattern of inflection, combination, derivation, and change that may be observed and classified.

Morphemes are the smallest meaningful elements of a word. These elements take a meaning or grammatical function. They cannot be further subdivided into still smaller units. Thus morpheme is "a minimal unit of meaning with a grammatical function."

For a better understanding of morphemes, look at the following words: Inimitable

Boxes

Talking

Yes

The first three of the words have certain 'elements' attached to them. These elements are called "affixes".

"—in" carries a negative meaning

"— ible carries a state of quality

"—es " expresses plurality "—ing" denotes a sense of duration

"yes" does not possess any affix.

Thus "—in", "—ible","—es","—ing" and "yes" are morphemes.

Two Types of Morphemes These are two types of morphemes- 1. Free Morphemes and 2. Bound Morphemes.

B1. Free Morphemes are units, which can stand by themselves as single words. They cannot be divided into smaller units or grammatical parts. They do not have affixes. They have only a base form which is also called as 'root' or 'stem'.

Door, Shirt, yes, come are examples of Free morphemes.

Free Morphemes can further be classified as

1. Lexical Morphemes
2. Functional Morphemes

All content words are lexical Morphemes Nouns, adjectives and verbs, form lexical morphemes. Lexical morphemes are listed as head words in a dictionary. Some examples for lexical morphemes are flower, man, women, beautiful, sing, dance.

Lexical Morphemes are treated as 'open class' because new lexemes can be added to the language.

Conjunctions, prepositions, articles and pronouns are functional morphemes. Functional words are treated as 'closed' class since we rarely add new functional morphemes to the language. Some examples for functional morphemes are given below:

And, but, in out, a, an, the, he, she, it.

Bound Morphemes cannot stand alone. They are generally attached to a free morpheme. Bound Morphemes are dependent elements. They occur before or after the base form. These elements are called affixes. For example,

`Dishonest' has two morphemes-Vis ' and `honest.' Dis' is an affix and a bound morpheme: 'honest' is a free morpheme or the 'stem'

Prefixes and Suffixes
Affixes can be prefixes or suffixes.

Affixes which precede the stem are 'prefixes'. E.g- unkind, obedience, mistrust, incompetent

Affixes which follow the stem are 'suffixes'. E.g.- neatly, childhood. Bound Morphemes are further classified into two types. (1) Derivational Morphemes (2) Inflectional Morphemes.

New words can be formed using derivational morphemes. Derivational Morphemes change the grammatical category of words. Some examples for rivational morphemes are as follows: Prefixes: —in,—im, it,

Suffixes: --ish, ness, ly, ment, less

New words can be formed with inflectional morphemes. Inflectional morphemes indicate number, tense degree and case. They indicate the grammatical function of a word. Some examples for inflectional morphemes are as follows:

Singular, Plural `-s% 'es,','-en' as in chairs, roses, oxen
Tense with number: s', (He sings)
--ing (He is singing)

When a word has both inflectional and derivational suffix, there is a specific order. In a word derivational suffix precedes inflectional suffix.

Eg. Faith

Faithful

Faithfully

In the gives example 'faith' is the 'base' or 'stem'. ful' is the derivational morpheme and '-- ely' is the inflectional morpheme.

Although it is possible to recognize morphemes as free or bound, all the -.words in English cannot be analysed that easily. For example it is difficult to analyse irregular nouns and verbs. For example look at the given words.

Singular   Plural

Man   Men

Goose   Geese

In the given words, the plural marker, is not separately attached with the 'base' or 'stem' as cats, dogs, and houses.

Similarly, in the word 'receive', 're is the prefix but' receive' is not a free morpheme.

Numerous technical terms are available to describe and define such cases.

Some morphemes have several phonetic forms. For example, the past tense marker '---e d' is pronounced in three different ways depending on the context in which they appear. '—ect is pronounced.

Eg.   look   looked (-t)
        raise   raised (-d)
        doubt doubted (-id)

Whiles `phones' are used to realize 'phonemes', 'morphs' are used to realize 'morphemes'. Study the following sets:

Table teach All the above given words have only one morph and they are single lexical morphemes.

$$Set\ 2: lions = \quad lion + s$$
$$tables = \quad table + s$$
$$taught = teach + past\ participle$$

All the above given words in Set 2 comprise two morphemes each. Allomorphy

The relationship between morphs and morphemes is called Allomorphy.

The variant forms of a morpheme are called Allomorphs. Eg. The past tense marker ---

`ed' is pronounced in three different ways as /-t/ or /d/ or /id/

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