Morphology II

FSEM CORE S119: Language as Human Nature
Fall 2025
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Warm-up

1. Discuss with your neighbor the best bagel flavor
2. Consider the following compounds in American English, which is West Germanic language spoken by approximately 246 million speakers. Each compound is comprised of two morphemes. Which one is more central to the meaning of the whole compound.

blackboard	dollhouse	jumpsuit	spoon-feed
whitewash	breakdance	nationwide	blue-green

Logistics

- Report 1 due Friday

Learning Objectives

- Distinguish between derivational and inflectional morphology
- Give a general rule in English for determining category of complex morphemes
- Describe some other word formation processes
- Practice morphophonemic analysis

Summary: We build on our discussion of morphology to distinguish broad types of morphology, give a general rule for the part of speech of complex morphemes, and work on morphophonemic analysis.

Motivation for Morphology

MORPHOLOGY IS THE STUDY of the word formation processes in a language. We delineate between the mental lexicon, where roots and affixes are stored in memory (along with their meaning and phonemes), and the rules that govern the production and comprehension of complex morphemes.

The discussion today draws from Seth Cable's wonderful Introduction to Linguistic Theory materials taught at University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Additional Morphology Key Terms and Concepts

WE DISCUSSED SOME KEY TERMS LAST CLASS. We add a few more here.

- **Root**: A root constitutes the core part of the word, the smallest morpheme in a complex word. Roots typical have a lexical category (i.e., part of speech).
- **Base**: A base is the form which an affix attaches to.

Question

For the word, unhappiness, what is the root and what are the bases?

English Compounds and the Right-Hand Head Rule

COMPOUNDING IS A VERY COMMON PHENOMENON in language, and it is particularly prevalent in English. In compounding, one word is formed from two free morphemes (rather than via a free morpheme and an affix). How do we know compounds are ultimately one word? The placement of stress!

greenhouse green **house**

Practice Problems

1. Give the morphological tree structure of all the compounds from the warmup, repeated below:

blackboard	dollhouse	jumpsuit	spoon-feed
whitewash	breakdance	nationwide	blue-green

2. What determines the category of the whole compound?

We can strive for a generalization of the pattern from compounds, called **The Right-Hand Head Rule** (RHHR). In an English compound, the head is the right-most morpheme.

Question

Reconsider the rules for English morphology with affixes that we discussed last class (copied below). Can the RHHR be extended to these case also? If, so, how do you have to modify the representations of affixes to account for the pattern?

Rule	Example
N → V + /ər/	player
N → A + /nɛs/	happiness
a → V + /əbl/	doable
a → V + /ɪŋ/	sickening
a → A + /ər/	taller
V → /ɹi/ + V	reinvest
a → /ʌn/ + A	uninteresting
V → /ʌn/ + V	unlock

Inflectional vs. Derivational Morphology

THERE ARE TWO BROAD CATEGORIES of affixes. To help demonstrate the differences let's consider some key observations.

Key Observations

Some suffixes like un, able, and ing sometimes fail to combine with words.

Undo (to reverse doing)	*Unkick (to reverse kicking?)
Doable (able to be done)	*Arriveable (able to be arrived?)
Annoying (makes people annoyed)	*Eating (makes people eaten?)

While other suffixes, like er (meaning more than), ed (past tense), and s (plural) seem to be broadly applicable. And in the rare cases those do fail, as in *childs, *speaked, and *intelligenter, there is some way of combining those words with a morpheme to get the same meaning (children, spoke, and more intelligent).

Additionally, this subset of suffixes that are more **productive** (more widely able to be combined with words), also have impacts on other words in a sentence.

Dave is tall**er** than Bill	*Dave is tall than Bill.
Dave has call**ed**.	*Dave has call.
The boy**s** are happy.	*The boy are happy.

- **Inflectional Morphology**
  - Doesn't affect the category of the resulting word.
  - Never fails to combine with a word because of its meaning.
  - Presence can affect other words in the sentence.
- **Derivational Morphology**
  - Can affect the category of the resulting word.
  - Sometimes fails to combine with words because of their meaning.
  - Presence does not affect other words in the sentence.

Morpheme Ordering Constraint

There is one finally way to distinguish between inflectional and derivational morphology. There is a constraint called the **Morpheme Ordering Constraint**. It states that an inflectional affix can be added to a word containing a derivational one, but a derivational affix cannot be added to a word containing an inflectional one. For examples bakers vs. *tallerness. We can use this to test for the status of an affix.

Question

There is a rule in English which states A $\rightarrow$A + 'ish' (e.g,. blue to blueish, tall to tallish). The affix ish does not affect the category of a word and applies to pretty much any adjective. Is 'ish' a derivational or inflectional affix?

Other Word Formation Processes

WE HAVE BEEN FOCUSING ON prefixation and suffixation. However, there are other types of mophological rules in the world's languages. Consider the following data from Tagalog, an Austronesian language spoken by roughly 87 million people.[1]

[1] Tagalog is called Filipino in the Philippines, where it is one of the two national languages (along side English).

[bili]	'buy'	[binili]	'bought'
[basa]	'read (pres)'	[binasa]	'read (past)'
[sulat]	'write'	[sinulat]	'wrote'

Consider the following pairs of words from Bahasa Indonesian, also called Indonesian, which is an Austronesian language spoken by roughly 252 million speakers.[2]

[2] Bahasa Indonesian is a standardized variety of Malay.

[oraŋ]	'man'	[oraŋ oraŋ]	'men'
[anak]	'child'	[anak anak]	'children'
[maŋga]	'mango'	[maŋga maŋga]	'mangoes'

Finally, consider the following pairs of words from English, a West Germanic language, spoken by roughly 1.46 billion people.[3]

[3] I'm actually not sure if this process holds for all of the world's Englishes, but in typically American fashion, I will assume so.

[spik]	'speak'	[spowk]	'spoke'
[ɹajt]	'write'	[ɹowt]	'wrote'
[tʃuz]	'choose'	[tʃowz]	'chose'

Morphophonemic Analysis

'attentive'	[ʌtɛntɪv]	'inattentive'	[ɪnʌtɛntɪv]
'hospitable'	[hɑspɪtɨbəl]	'inhospitable'	[ɪnhɑspɪtɨbəl]
'possible'	[pɑsəbəl]	'impossible'	[ɪmpɑsəbəl]
'balanced'	[bælənst]	'imbalanced'	[ɪmbælənst]
'complete'	[kʌmplit]	'incomplete'	[ɪŋkʌmplit]
'glorious'	[glɔɹiəs]	'inglorious'	[ɪŋglɔɹiəs]

Practice Problems

Consider the following Swedish data.

[stol]	'chair'	[stolen]	'the chair'
[kat]	'cat'	[katen]	'the chair'
[tidniŋ]	'newspaper'	[tidniŋen]	'the newspaper'
[lampa]	'lamp'	[lampan]	'the lamp'
[sofa]	'sofa'	[sofan]	'the sofa'
[katar]	'cats'	[katarna]	'the cats'
[bilar]	'cars'	[bilarna]	'the cars'
[stolar]	'chairs'	[stolarna]	'the chairs'

1. What are the allomorphs for plural in Swedish?

2. Propose a rule that relates the allomorphs to one morpheme?

Before Next Class

- Reading and pre-class quiz
- Complete the first report