

English/ Sem.3/CC-14 (Descriptive Linguistics)

Morphology and Word Formation

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and the rules governing the formation of words in a language.

The **formation of words** can be categorized in the following manner:

1. Some words can be divided into parts which still have meaning.
2. Many words have meaning by themselves. But some words have meaning only when used with other words.
3. Some of the parts into which words can be divided can stand alone as words. But others cannot.
4. These word-parts that can occur only in combination must be combined in the correct way.
5. Languages create new words systematically.

- **Words** that have meaning by themselves—boy, food, door—are called **lexical morphemes**.

Those words that function to specify the relationship between one lexical morpheme and another—words like at, in, on, -ed, -s—are called **grammatical morphemes**.

Thus, **a morpheme** can be defined as a minimal unit having more or less constant meaning and more or less constant form.

Morphemes can vary in size: neither the number of syllables nor the length of a word can indicate what is a morpheme and what isn't. For example, Albatross is a long word but a single morpheme, -y (as in dreamy) is also a single morpheme.

An **allomorph**, in **linguistics** is a variant phonological form of a **morpheme**. Allomorphs are forms that are related to each other but slightly different, depending on the surrounding environment.

A simple example is the English word *a*. It means something like “one of something, but not any particular one”, like in these examples:

a book
a skirt

a friend
a phone call

But if the word following *a* begins with a vowel and not a consonant, then the word *a* changes its form:

an apple
an ice cream cone
an iguana
an idea

The two forms *a* and *an* are slightly different in their form, but they clearly both have the same meaning. And each one shows up in a different predictable environment: *a* before words that start with consonants and *an* before words that begin with vowels.

Another example of allomorphy in English is in the plural morpheme. In written English, the form of the plural morpheme is spelled *-s*, as in:

carrots
books
hats
friends
apples
iguanas

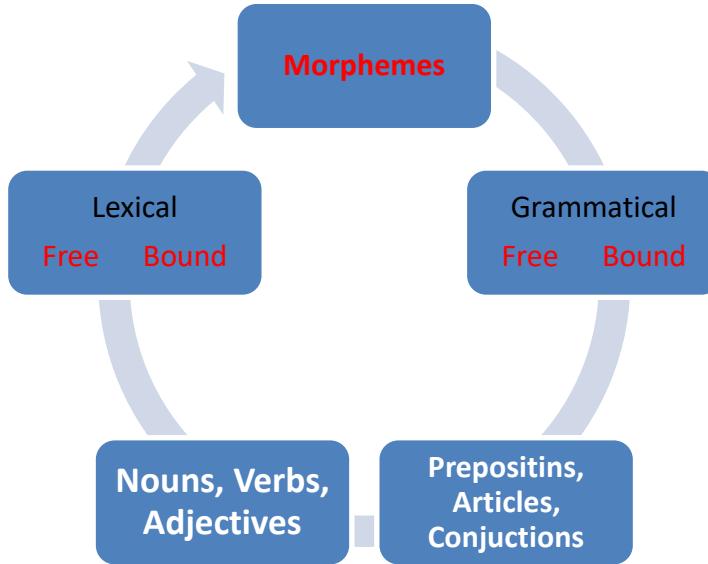
But it's spelled *-es* in words like:

churches
bushes
quizzes

And in fact, even in the cases where it's spelled *-s*, it's pronounced as [s] for words that end in a voiceless segment (*carrots, books, cliffs*) and as [z] for words that end in voiced sounds (*worms, dogs, birds*). So it's got two written forms (*-s* and *-es*) and three spoken forms ([s], [z], [ɪz]), but a consistent meaning of "more than one".

Each form is an allomorph of the plural morpheme.

Division of Morphemes into Various Types



Morphophonemics is the study of the relations between morphemes and their phonological realizations, components, or mappings. It is the body of data concerning these relations in a given language.

Morphophonemics involves an investigation of the phonological variations within morphemes, usually marking different grammatical functions; e.g., the vowel changes in “sleep” and “slept,” “bind” and “bound,” “vain” and “vanity,” and the consonant alternations in “knife” and “knives,” “loaf” and “loaves.”

In linguistics, **word formation** is the creation of a new **word**. The boundary between **word formation** and semantic change can be difficult to define as a new use of an old **word** can be seen as a new **word** derived from an old one and identical to it in form.

There are **four** main kinds of **word formation**:
, **prefixes** **suffixes**, **conversion** and **compounds**.

Prefixes.: We add prefixes before the base or stem of a word. **Examples:**
prefixes

Unusual, undemocratic: un- means ‘not’ or ‘op...

Post-war, postgraduate: post- means ‘after’

Multipurpose, multicultural: multi- means ‘many’

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