Morphological Structure of English Words

The **word** as an autonomous unit of the language system should be distinguished from another fundamental language unit – the **morpheme**.

A morpheme

- Is **an association of a given meaning with a given sound pattern**, which makes it similar to a word.

- Unlike a word, **a morpheme is not autonomous**, morphemes occur in speech only as constituent parts of words.

- Cannot be divided into smaller meaningful units, so it is defined as **the minimum meaningful unit of the language system**.

According to their form

Morphemes

Free

Semi-bound (semi-free)
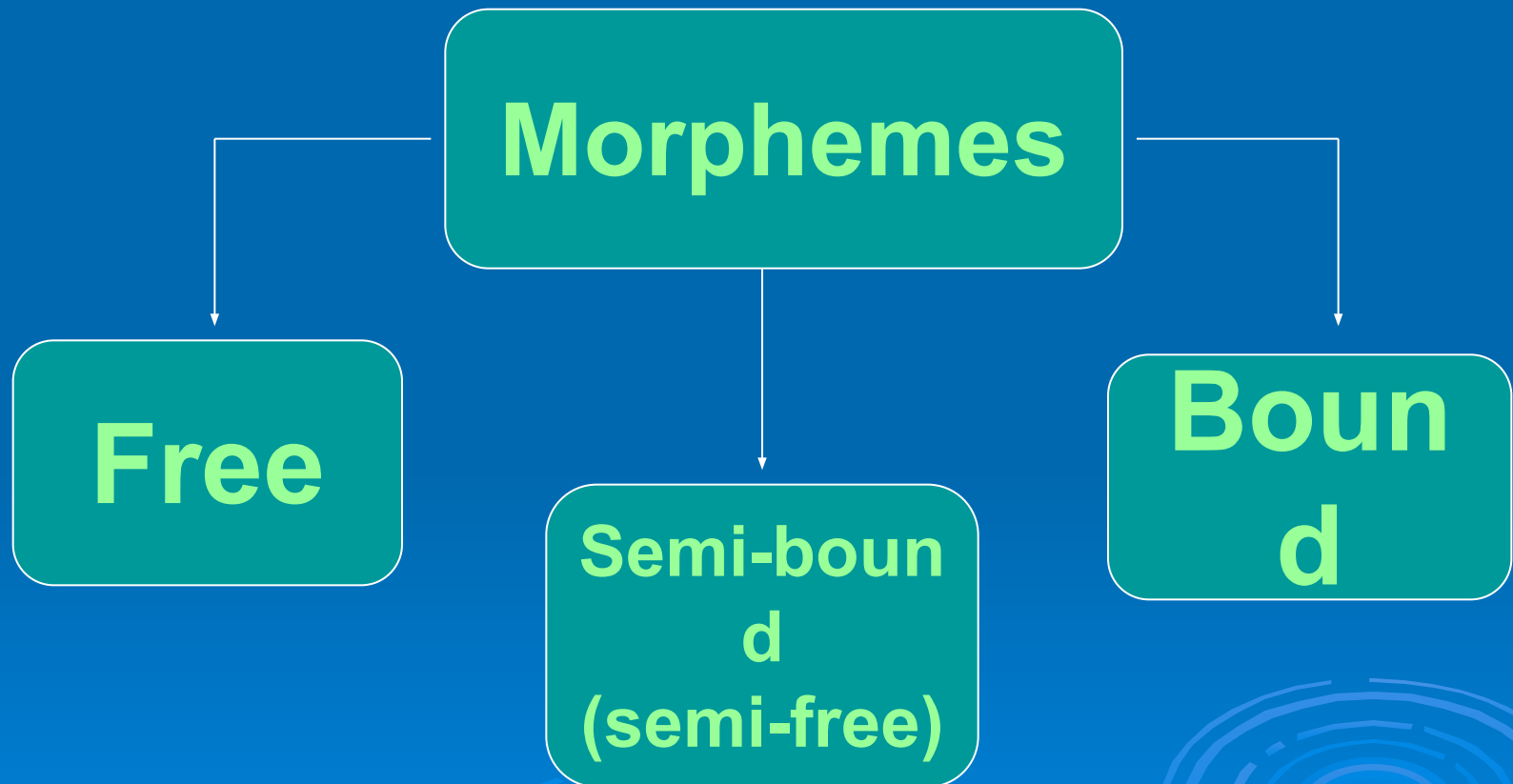
Bound

Free morphemes

Are capable of forming words without adding other morphemes, which means that they coincide with the stems or independent forms of words:

- **House- (morpheme) = house (word)**
- **Shoe- (morpheme) = shoe (word)**
- **Bread- (morpheme) = bread (word)**

Bound morphemes

☐ May not stand alone without a loss or change of their meaning, they are always bound to something else. It means that they do not coincide with stems or independent forms of words:

☐ Horr- (morpheme) – horr-or (word)
☐ Agit- (morpheme) – agit-ate (word)
☐ Nat- (morpheme) – nat-ion (word)
☐ -Ible (morpheme) – elig-ible (word)
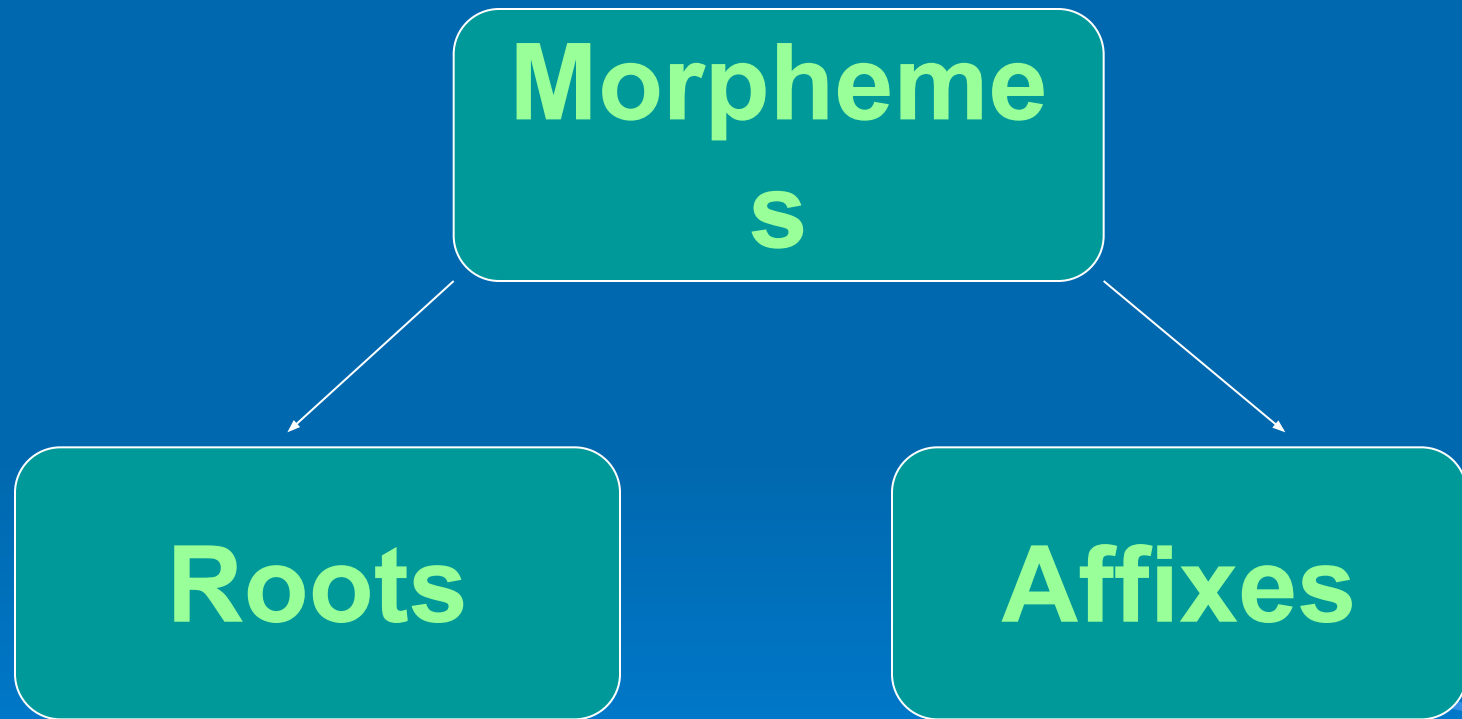☐ Pre- (morpheme) – pre-war (word)

Free and Bound morphemes

- **Prefixes and suffixes** (jointly called derivational affixes) are always **bound**

- **Root morphemes** may be both **free and bound**

- **Bound root morphemes** are mainly found among **loan words**:
  arrog-ance, char-ity, cour-age, dis-tort, in-volve, toler-able, etc.

Semi-bound (semi-free) morphemes

- Can function in a morphemic sequence both as an affix and as a free morpheme:

- E.g., the morphemes **«well»** and **«half»** can occur as **free morphemes** (cf. *sleep well, half an hour*) or as **bound morphemes** (cf. *well-known, half-done*)

According to their role in constructing words

Morphemes

Roots

Affixes

According to their position in a word

Affixes

Prefixes

Infixes (unproductive in English)

Suffixes
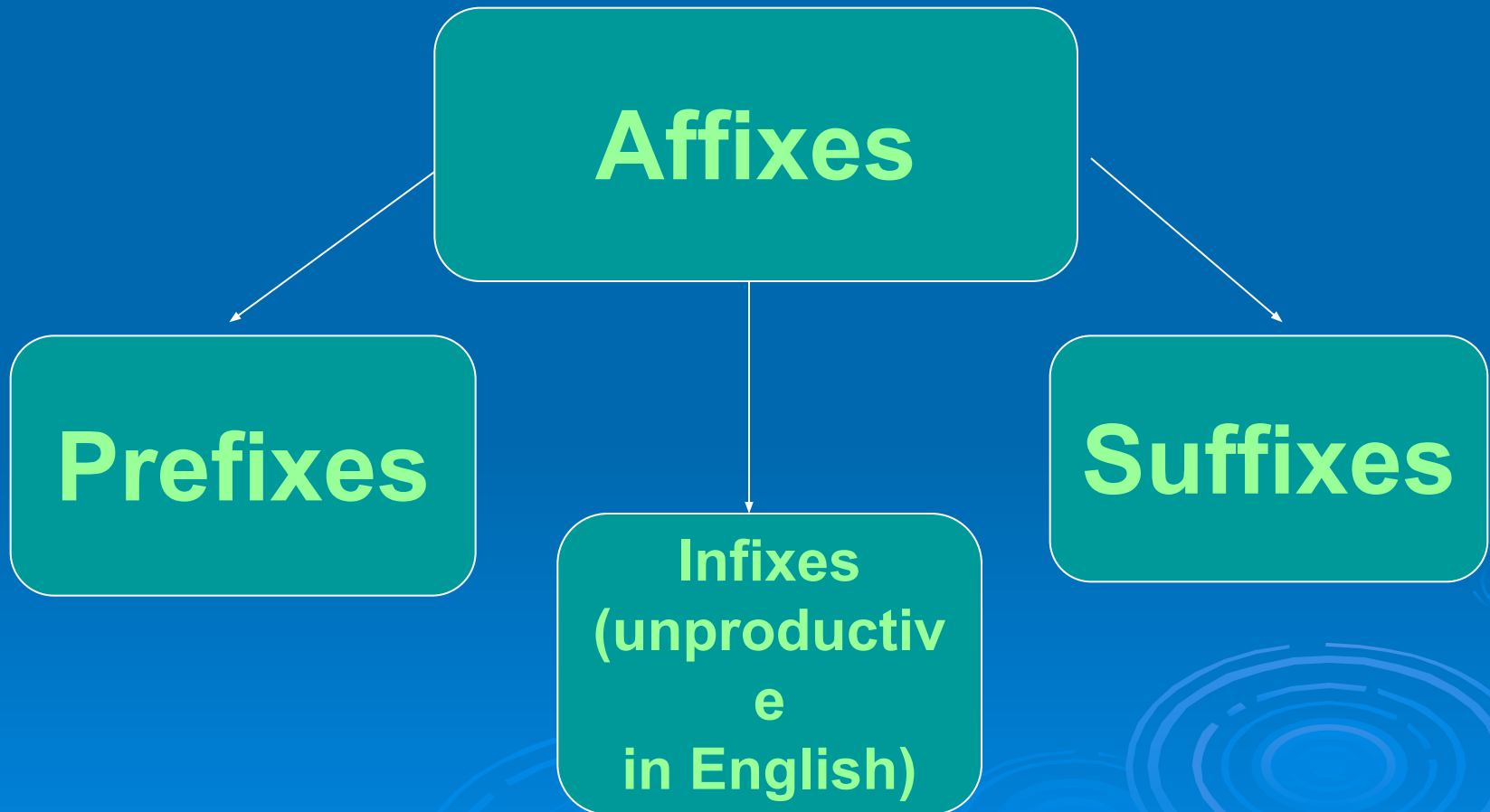
According to their function and meaning

Affixes

Derivational

Functional (Endings, inflexions)
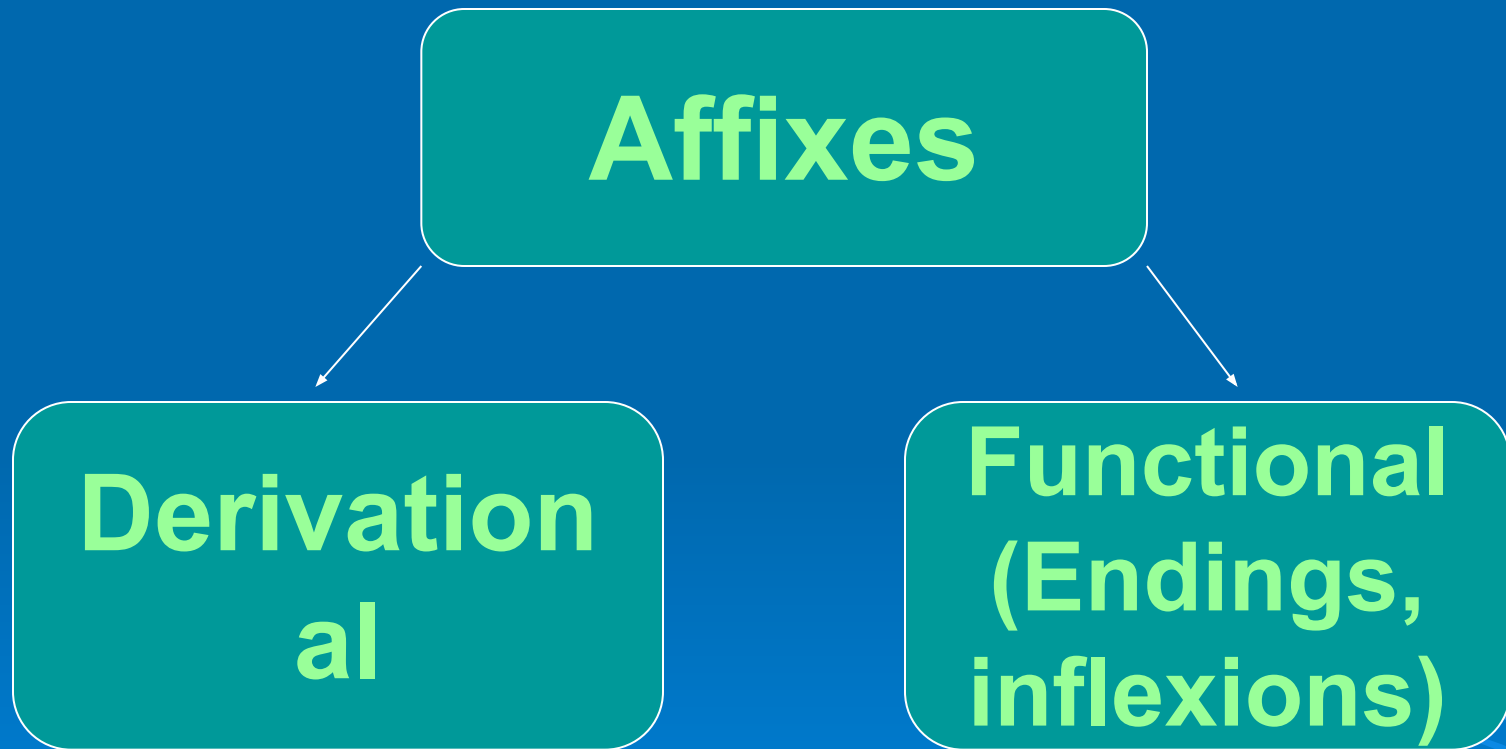
A stem

- When a derivational or functional affix is stripped from the word, what remains is **a stem (a stem base)**

- If a stem consists of a single morpheme, it is **simple** *(heart, fact, month, red, etc.)*

- If a stem consists of a root and an affix, it is **derived** *(hearty, factual, monthly, reddish, etc.)*

- If a stem consists of two root morphemes (and an affix / affixes), it is **compound** *(teaspoon, mother-in-law, dog-owner, looking-glass, etc.)*

A root

- Is the main morphemic vehicle of a given idea in a given language at a given stage of its development

- Is the ultimate constituent element which remains after the removal of all functional and derivational affixes and does not admit any further analysis

- Is the common element of words within a word-cluster (cf. *heart, hearten, dishearten, heartily, heartless, hearty, heartiness, sweetheart, heart-broken, etc*.)

A root

☐ The etymological treatment of root morphemes encourages a search for **cognates (elements descended from a common ancestor)**:

☐ *Heart (English) – cor (Latin) – kardia (Greek) – corazon (Spanish) – Herz (German) – сердце (Russian), etc.*

A suffix

 Is a derivational morpheme following the stem and forming a new derivative in a different part of speech or a different word class: *luck – luck-y – luck-i-ly*

A prefix

- Is a derivational morpheme standing before the root and modifying the meaning of the original word: *happy – unhappy, president – ex-president, argument – counter-argument, etc.*

A prefix

- Prefixes do not generally change the part-of-speech meaning of the resultant word
- An exception to the rule is the formation of some verbs and statives: *friend, n – befriend, v; earth, n – unearth (выкапывать, вырывать из земли, доставать из-под земли), v; sleep, n – asleep (stative), etc.*

An infix

- Is an affix placed within the word: **-n-** in **«stand»** (this type is not productive).

Combining forms

- Affixes should not be confused with combining forms

- A **combining form** is a bound form that is distinguished from an affix historically by the fact that it is always **borrowed from another language in which it existed as a free or combining form**.

Combining forms

- Most combining forms were borrowed from **Latin and Greek** (however, not exclusively) and have thus become **international**:

- *Cyclo- (from Greek «kuklos» - circle): cyclometer, cyclopedia, cyclic, bicycle, etc.*

- *Mal- (from French «mal» - bad): malfunction, malnutrition, etc.*

- Compound and derivative words which these combining forms are part of never existed in their original language but were coined only in modern times.

Morphemic and Structural Analysis of English Words

Morphemic analysis

- Implies stating the number and type of morphemes that make up the word:
- Girl (one root morpheme) – **a root word**
- Girlish (one root morpheme plus one affix) – **a derived word**
- Girl-friend (two stems) – **a compound word**
- Last-minuter (two stems and a common affix) – **a compound derivative**

Structural word-formation analysis

- Studies the structural correlation with other words as well as the structural patterns or rules on which words are built

Structural word-formation analysis

- A **correlation** is a set of binary oppositions, in which each second element is derived from the first by a general rule valid for all members of the relation:

  - Child – childish
  - Woman – womanish
  - Monkey – monkeyish
  - Spinster – spinsterish, etc.

Structural word-formation analysis

☐ This correlation demonstrates that
- in English there is a type of derived adjectives consisting of a noun stem and a suffix –ish;
- the stems are mostly those of animate nouns;
- any one word built according to this pattern contains a semantic component common to the whole group, namely «typical of, or having the bad qualities of».

Morphological Analysis of English Words

A synchronic morphological analysis (introduced by L. Bloomfield)

- Is accomplished by the procedure known as **the analysis into immediate constituents**

- The main opposition here is **the opposition of stem and affix** which reveals the motivation of the word

A synchronic morphological analysis

Ungentlemanly

Un- **gentlemanly**

gentleman **ly**
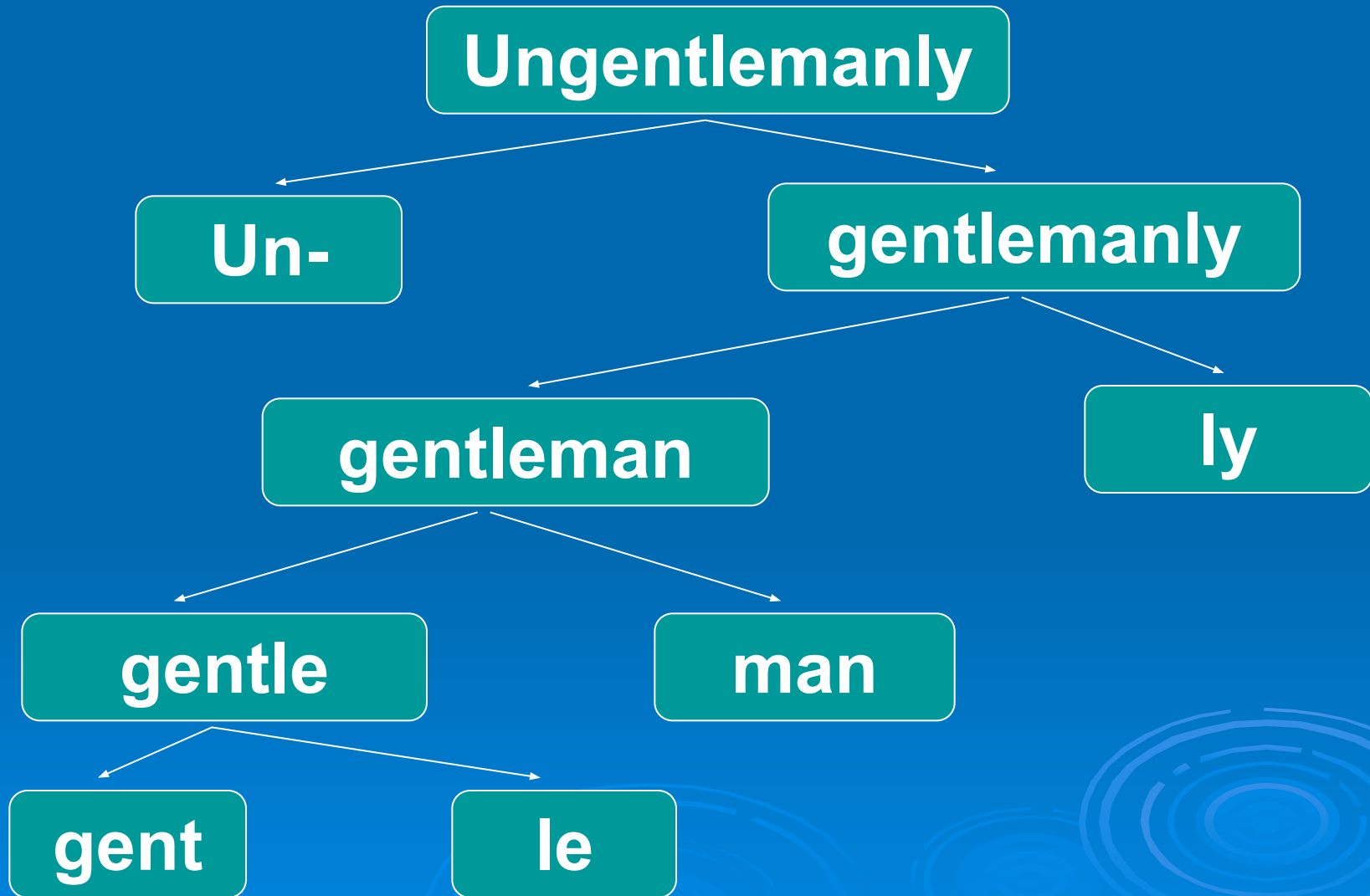
gentle **man**

gent **le**

A synchronic morphological analysis

- **Un-** is split after the pattern: **un- + adjective stem** (uncertain, unconscious, uneasy, unearthly, untimely, unwomanly, etc.);

- **-Ly** is split following the pattern: **noun stem + -ly** (womanly, masterly, scholarly, etc.);

- Gentleman is split into **gentle- + -man** after a similar pattern observed in «nobleman» **(adjective stem + the semi-affix -man)**

- Gentle is split into **gent- + -le** following the pattern: **noun stem + -le** (brittle, fertile, juvenile, noble, subtle, little, etc.)

A synchronic morphological analysis

- The constituents that allow further splitting into morphemes are called **immediate** (gentlemanly, gentleman, gentle),
- Those that don't allow this are termed **ultimate** (un-, -ly, gent-, le-, -man).

A synchronic morphological analysis

☐ The procedure of the analysis into immediate constituents is reduced to the recognition and classification of the same and different morphemes as well as same and different patterns: thus it permits the tracing and understanding of the vocabulary system.

Thank you for your attention!