

# MORPHEMIC STRUCTURE OF THE WORD



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1. Morphological system of the language.
2. General characteristics of morphemes.
3. Speech variants of the morpheme (morphs and allomorphs).
4. Classification of morphemes.

# *I. The Morphological System of Language*

The morphological system of language reveals its properties through **the morphemic structure of words.**

?

**What are the units  
of morphology?**

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# *The Morphological System of Language*

- the word (the main unit of morphology);
- the morpheme

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**What do you know  
about the word?**

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# *The Morphological System of Language*

**The WORD is:**

- a basic nominative unit;
- an elementary indivisible constituent part of the lexicon;
- communication means.

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# *The Morphological System of Language*

According to Prof. Blokh (Ch. II § 2),

**The WORD is:**

- a *basic nominative unit* of  
language formed by  
morphemes;

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# *The Morphological System of Language*

- *elementary component of the lexicon (i.e. a component indivisible into smaller segments as regards its nominative function);*

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# ***The Morphological System of Language***

*- used for the formation of  
the sentence (= a unit of  
information in the  
communication process).*

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## ***2. General Characteristics of Morphemes***

**What is a morpheme?**

# *General Characteristics of Morphemes*

**Morphemes are  
significant components  
of words, their  
elementary meaningful  
parts.**

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# *General Characteristics of Morphemes*

**NB:**

in studying the morpheme we actually study the word in the necessary details of its composition and functions.

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# General Characteristics of Morphemes

The meaning of words can be defined in terms of:

- **syllables**

*E.g. par-ty, par-ting*

- **morphemes**

*E.g. party, part-ing (\*par-ting)*

*meet-ing*

*pass-ing*

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

So,  
the word is made up of **morphemes**  
(**elements of meaning**):

*part and -ing*



independent

dependent

free

bound

?

Is “par-”

in “*parcel*”, “*parking*”,

“*particle*”, etc.

a morpheme?

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# General Characteristics of Morphemes

- 1) "par-" does not signal anything semantically in common,
- 2) *-cel*, *-king* and *-ticle* do not seem to attach themselves as bound morphemes to any other words in English.

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

**NB:**

in English the syllable as a unit of sound has *no correspondence* with the morpheme as a unit of meaning

- "party" (2 syllables, 1 morpheme);
- "parting" (2 syllables, 2 morphemes).

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# General Characteristics of Morphemes

As the unit of morphological level the morpheme can be defined as *an abstract element of meaning*.

In other words, it is *a minimal meaningful unit*.

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

As all other language units morphemes are *twofold signs* which have:

- **the plane of content;**
- **the plane of expression.**

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

In the hierarchy of meaningful language units (the word, the word-group, the sentence and the text) the morpheme can be described as *the minimal and indivisible unit*: it cannot be segmented further without losing its constitutive essence, that is, the meaning of a definite form.

**E.g.: -ed ≠ e and d**



# General Characteristics of Morphemes

Therefore,  
the morpheme is *the minimal indivisible meaningful unit which participates in the formation of the word and regularly occurs in other words.*

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

**According to Prof. Blokh (Ch. II § 2)**

**the MORPHEME is:**

- meaningful segmental component of the word (expresses abstract, "significative" meanings, used as constituents for the formation of more concrete, "nominative" meanings of words);

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# General Characteristics of Morphemes

- formed by phonemes (the shortest morphemes include only one phoneme)

*E.g.: cos-y [-i]; a-blaze [ə-]; enter-s [-z]);*

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# General Characteristics of Morphemes

- elementary component of the word (i.e. indivisible into smaller segments as regards its significative function).

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

## *Words vs Morphemes:*

*The words*, being autonomous units, name objects of reality or objects of our thought.

*The morphemes* are not autonomous and the meaning of root morphemes is best described as associative.

*E.g.: friend* evokes associations with many words that are built with the help of this morpheme (*a friend, friendship, to befriend, friendly*).

# General Characteristics of Morphemes

## *Words vs Morphemes:*

Unlike the morpheme - *friend*, the word *friend* evokes in our minds the concept of a friend (which, by the way, may be different in different cultures).



### 3. Morphs and Allomorphs

The morpheme is a language unit. It is realized in speech as *the morph*.



# Morphs and Allomorphs

*Morphs are the smallest meaningful successions of phonemes into which words are broken up.*

E.g.: *paint, paint - s, paint - ed, paint - ing, paint - er*

# Morphs and Allomorphs

Different morphs if being the variants of the same morpheme are called *allomorphs* of the morpheme.



In other words *allomorphs manifest the same morpheme in speech.*

# Morphs and Allomorphs

Allomorphs can be:

## 1) phonemically conditioned

E.g.: /s/, /z/, /ɪz/ (allomorphs for the plural “-s”);

/ɪd/, /d/, /t/ (allomorphs for the past tense “-ed”).

## 2) morphemically conditioned

E.g.: “-en” in the words “oxen”, “children”.

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# Morphs and Allomorphs

Allomorphs are singled out on the basis of distributional analysis.

**3 main types of distribution:**

- ***Non-contrastive*** (meanings or functions are the same)

E.g., *learnt, learned*

# Morphs and Allomorphs

- *Contrastive* (meanings or functions are different)

E.g., *look – ed, look – ing;*

# Morphs and Allomorphs

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- *Complementary* (different environments of formally different morphs which are united by the same meaning or function)

E.g.: 1) **ill**iterate, **ir**relevant, **in**numerous, **im**possible;

2) [z] / [s] / [iz] (a phonemic complementary distribution;

3) [z] / [s] / [iz] – [ən] in oxen, children (a morphemic complementary distribution).

# Morphs and Allomorphs

## Conclusion 1:

- morpheme is a kind of abstraction. It is the notion of the sphere of language (paradigmatics);



# Morphs and Allomorphs

## Conclusion 2:

- Morphs are its speech realizations which regularly occur in different utterances and belong to the sphere of speech (syntagmatics);

# Morphs and Allomorphs

## Conclusion 3:

- morpheme as a set of morphs may be represented by their variants — allomorphs.

## 4. Classification of Morphemes

The morpheme may be characterized by a lot of criteria, i.e. *its semantics, form and distribution.*

# 4. Classification of Morphemes

## 1. According to their semantics:

**-lexical** (roots)

E.g.: *teach* - er, *part*-ing, un-*like*-able

**-grammatical** (inflections)

E.g.: write-*s*, cross-*ing*, play-*ed*),

**-lexical-grammatical** (affixes)

E.g.: sing-*er*, happi-*ness*, love-*ly*.

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# Classification of Morphemes

## *The ROOT:*

- expresses the concrete, "material" part of the word meaning;
- obligatory;
- the common lexical element of words within a word family

*E.g.: formate, formative, formatively, formation, formational, formalistic, formality.*

# Classification of Morphemes

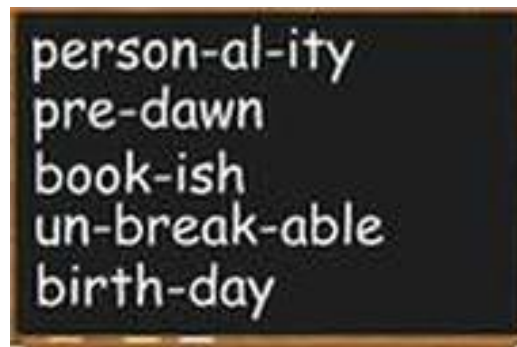
## **AFFIXES:**

- are meaningful dependent elements;
- specify lexico-semantic and grammatico-semantic meaning of the word.

# Classification of Morphemes

According to their place:

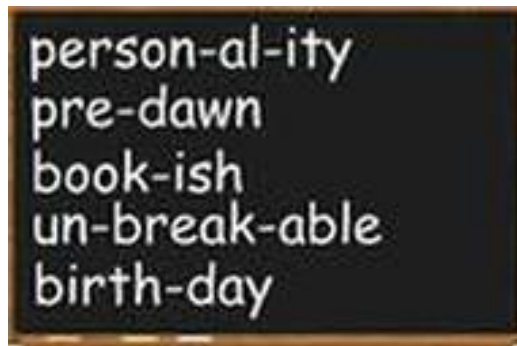
- **prefixes** (affixes which precede the root);
- **suffixes** (affixes which follow it).



# Classification of Morphemes

*Prefixes in English* have a purely lexical role. They allow the construction of a large number of new words:

*E.g.:* *un-*, *de-*, *anti-*, *super-*, etc.:  
*un*helpful, *de*frost, *anti*social,  
*super*structure.



person-al-ity  
pre-dawn  
book-ish  
un-break-able  
birth-day

# Classification of Morphemes

*Suffixes in English* are of two kinds:

1. Most are purely lexical (*derivational suffixes*). Their primary function is to change the meaning of the root form (E.g.: *-ness, -ship, -able*: *happiness, friendship, workable*).



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# Classification of Morphemes

2. *Inflexions* (purely grammatical suffixes) express different morphological categories. Their role is to show how the word must be used in a sentence

E.g.: plural *-s*,  
past tense *-ed*,  
comparative *-er*.

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# Classification of Morphemes

**NB:**

The abstract complete morphemic model of the common English word is

*‘prefix + root + lexical suffix + grammatical suffix’.*



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# Classification of Morphemes

## 2. In accordance with the functions within a word:

- **lexical** (the invariant component of all word forms);
- **grammatical** (the variant component in the morphological paradigm of word forms);
- **word-building** (the variant component in the lexicological pattern of word forms).

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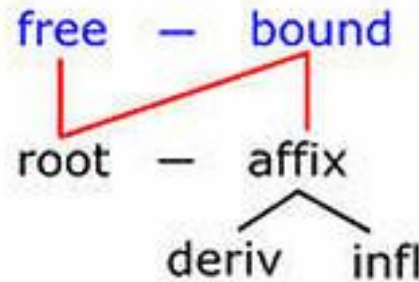
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# Classification of Morphemes

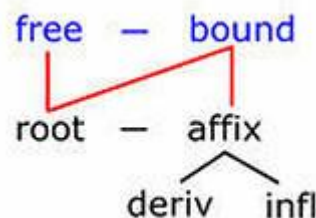
**3. According to the degree of self dependence:**

- free,
- bound
- semi-bound.



# Classification of Morphemes

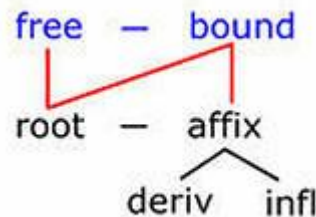
A **free morpheme** is a one-morpheme word that can function independently (e.g. box, dark). It can form words.



# Classification of Morphemes

**A bound morpheme** functions only as a constituent part of the word. It:

- cannot form the word by itself;
- has no meaning in itself (it acquires its meaning only in combination with the free morpheme).



# Classification of Morphemes

Bound morphemes can be productive.

They are few and homonymous:

**-e(s)** [z] / [s] / [iz]: the plural of the nouns, the possessive case of nouns, the third person singular present of verbs

**-(e)d** [d] / [t] / [id]: the past indefinite and past participle of verbs;

**-ing**: the gerund and present participle

**-er, - est**: the comparative and superlative degrees of adjectives and adverbs.

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# Classification of Morphemes

**Semi-bound morphemes** can function in the analytical form both as a part of this form and as a free morpheme. They are auxiliary morphemes.

# Classification of Morphemes

E.g.: “*will*”

- occurs as a **free morpheme** in the context that makes its identity clear (*He will do it tomorrow - I know he will*)

- occurs as a **bound morpheme** being the immediate constituent of the semantic and functional unit (*He will come*).

# Classification of Morphemes

4. On the basis of formal presentation:
- overt;
  - covert.

# Classification of Morphemes

*The overt morphemes* are expressed explicitly. They build the words.

*The covert morpheme* is identified as a contrastive absence of the morpheme expressing a certain function, zero morpheme.



# Classification of Morphemes

E.g.:

*deer sg* (1 overt morpheme + 1 covert morpheme) - *deer pl* (1 overt morpheme + 1 covert morpheme);

*boy sg* (1 overt morpheme + 1 covert morpheme) - *boys pl* (2 overt morphemes).

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# Classification of Morphemes

## 5. On the basis

of grammatical alternation:

- **additive** (outer grammatical suffixes, opposed to the absence of morphemes in grammatical alteration)

E.g.: look - *ed*, small - *er*

- **replacive** (the root phonemes of grammatical interchange)

E.g.: *men*, *feet*, *stood*, *forgot-forgotten*

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# Classification of Morphemes

## 6. On the basis of linear characteristics:

- continuous (linear);
- discontinuous.

# Classification of Morphemes

*Continuous morphemes* are expressed uninterruptedly.

*Discontinuous morphemes* can be found in grammatical units which consist of an auxiliary word and a grammatical suffix

E.g.: *be ... ing* - for the continuous forms

*have... en* - for the perfect forms

*be ... en* - for the passive forms

# Classification of Morphemes

## 7. According to the function:

- notional,
- functional.

# Classification of Morphemes

*Notional morphemes* serve as carriers of the material part of the lexical meaning of a word.

*Functional morphemes* change either the lexical meaning of a word (derivational, or word-building morphemes) or the grammatical meaning (form-building, or inflectional morphemes).

# Classification of Morphemes

## **NB:**

The borderline between the notional and the functional morphemes is not rigid and they can change their status in the course of time:

- *dom*, and *hood* developed from root morphemes;
- the present-day English: the morpheme *man* in such words as *a seaman* and *a policeman*.

# Classification of Morphemes

Usually morphemes evolutionize from notional to functional, but the opposite direction is also possible:

- the derivational suffix – *teen* acquires the status of a notional morpheme in *a teenager, teen problems, teen tunes, teen fashion, etc.*

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Thank You!

