Morphology

literal meaning: *the study of forms*

the study of words, their forms and the ways in which the words are related to other words of the same language;

Someone who doesn't know English would not know where one word begins or ends in an utterance like the sentence below:

Thedogsleptonthebed

the   dog   slept   on   the   bed

We separate written words by spaces, but in the spoken language there are no pauses between most words. Without knowledge of the language, one can't tell how many words are in an utterance. Knowing a word means knowing that a particular sequence of sounds is associated with a particular meaning. A speaker of English doe not have difficulty in segmenting the stream of sounds into individual words because each of these words is listed in his or her mental dictionary. That is part of a speaker's linguistic knowledge.

When you know a word, you know its sound (pronunciation) and its meaning. Because the sound-meaning relation is arbitrary, it is possible to have words with the same sound and different meanings (*bear* and *bare*) and words with the same meaning and different sounds (*sofa* and *couch*).

Each word includes also other pieces of information:
   - whether a particular word is a noun, a pronoun, a verb, an adjective, etc.,
   - one can specify the **grammatical category** or **syntactic class** of the word, (love- can be both a noun and a verb);
Thanks to such knowledge, people know how to form grammatical sentences and are able to distinguish grammatical from ungrammatical sentences.

Languages make a distinction between two types of words: **content words** and **function words**.
Content words are words such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs;
They represent concepts such as objects, actions, attributes, and ideas that we can think about such as *men*, *love* or *purple*.
Content words are sometimes called the **open class** words because we can and regularly do add new words to these classes, such as *Bollywood*.

Function words are words such as conjunctions (*and*, *or*, *but*, …), prepositions (*in*, *of*, at, …), articles (*a, an, the*), pronouns (*it*);
They do not have clear lexical meanings or evident concepts associated with them; they specify grammatical relations and have little or no semantic content. For example, the preposition *of* indicates possession, as in "the book of yours," but this word indicates many other kinds of

relations too. The *it* in *it's raining* and *he found it advisable* are further examples of words whose function is purely grammatical— they are required by the rules of syntax.

Function words are sometimes called the **closed class** words because we can't add new words to these classes.

Morphemes

Words/'word forms' may consist of a number of elements. We can recognize that English word forms such as <u>walks</u>, <u>walked</u>, <u>walking</u> must consist of one element <u>walk</u>, and a number of other elements such as *-s*, *-ed* and *-ing*.

Morphemes:

a meaningful morphological unit of a language that cannot be further divided into smaller meaningful parts, (e.g. un-, -break-, -able, forming *unbreakable*);

*It cannot be divided further; it's not the same as a word. (!)

<u>*Morpheme is the smallest meaningful lexical item in a language.*</u>

If a morpheme can stand alone ,it is considered **a root** (=it has a meaning of its own).

A morpheme may be represented by a single sound, such as the morpheme **a** meaning "without" as in *amoral* or by a single syllable, such as **child** and **ish** in *child + ish*. A morpheme may also consist of more than one syllable.

Every word in every language is composed of one or more morphemes.

Some point out "inconsistencies" in the English language. They observe that while *singers sing* and *flingers fling*, it is not the case that fingers "fing." However, English speakers know that *finger* is a single morpheme, or a **monomorphemic word**. The final *-er* syllable in *finger* is not a separate morpheme because a finger is not "something that fings."

The meaning of a morpheme must be <u>constant</u>. The morpheme *-er* means "one who does" in words like *singer*, *painter*, and *worker*, but the same sounds represent the comparative morpheme, meaning "more," in *nicer*, *prettier*, and *taller*. Two different morphemes may be pronounced identically. The identical form represents two morphemes because of the different meanings. The same sounds may occur in another word and not represent a separate morpheme at all, as in *finger.*

Conversely, the two morphemes *-er* and *-ster* have the same meaning, but different forms. Both *singer* and *songster* mean "one who sings." And like *-er*, *-ster* is not a morpheme in *monster* because a monster is not something that "mons" or someone that "is mon" the way *youngster* is someone who is young. All of this follows from the concept of the morpheme as a <u>sound</u> plus a <u>*meaning*</u> unit.

One morpheme	*child*
	help
	mean
Two morphemes	*child + ish*
	help + less
	mean + ing
Three morphemes	*child + ish + ness*
	help + less + ness
	mean + ing + ful
Four morphemes	*gentle + man + li + ness*
	un + desire + able + ity
More than four morphemes	*un + gentle + man + li + ness*
	anti + dis + establish + ment + ari + an + ism

Different types of morphemes:

- **free morphemes:** a morpheme that has individual meaning and can be formed independently; they can stand by themselves as single words- they can occur as separate words;

e.g. free, get, love, when; (they can be identified as simple nouns, adjectives, verb etc.)

- **bound morphemes:** they can't stand alone as words, they are typically attached to another form; [it can be said that all affixes (prefixes and suffixes) in English are bound morphemes];

e.g. -ed, -ness, re-;

When free morphemes are used with bound morphemes attached, the basic word forms are technically known as **stems**:

undressed   *jobless*

un-   *dress*   *-ed*   *job*   *-less*

(prefix)   *(stem)*   *(suffix)*   *(stem) (suffix)*

bound   *free*   *bound*   *free*   *bound*

Very often the element treated as the stem is not a free morpheme; e.g. <u>receive</u>, we can identify the bound morpheme <u>re-</u> at the beginning, but the element <u>-ceive</u> is not a separate

word form and hence cannot be a free morpheme; Such types of forms are sometimes called "bound stems" to make them distinct from "free stems".

Many words in English are made up of a <u>single free morpheme</u>. In the following sentence, each word is a distinct morpheme:

> *We need to go now, but you can stay.*

None of the above words can be divided into smaller meaningful units.

_____

Free morphemes: two sub-types

- lexical morphemes

These are those morphemes that carry the "content" of the message; they are large in number and independently meaningful. The lexical morphemes include nouns, adjectives, and verbs.

> cat, bad, honest, boy, girl, woman, excellent, etc.

- grammatical/ functional morphemes

The grammatical or functional morphemes are those morphemes that consist of functional words in a language such as prepositions, conjunctions determiners, and pronouns.

> and, but, or, above, on, into, after, that, the, etc.

Bound morphemes: two sub-types

- Bound roots

Bound roots are those bound morphemes that have lexical meaning when they are included in other bound morphemes to form the content words.

For example, -ceive, -tain, perceive, deceive, retain, contain, etc.

- Affixes

Affixes are those bound morphemes that naturally attached different types of words and used to change the meaning or function of those words.

For example, -ment in *payment, enjoyment, entertainment*; en- in *enlighten, enhance, enlarge*; 's in *Joseph's, Lora's*; -ing *reading, sleeping, singing* etc.

<u>Affixes</u>

Affixes can be categorized into five sub-classes according to their position in the word and function in a phrase or sentence. They are:

- prefixes

- infixes

- suffixes

- derivational

- inflectional

- **Prefixes**

Prefixes are bound morphemes included at the beginning of different types of words. For example in-, un-, sub-   *in<u>complete</u>, in<u>justice</u>, <u>un</u>able, <u>un</u>educated, <u>sub</u>way,* etc.

- **Infixes**

Infixes are those bound morphemes included within the words. There are no infixes that exist in the English language.

- **Suffixes**

Suffixes are those bound morphemes included at the end of different types of words. For example; -able, -less, -ness, -en,   *avail<u>able</u>, care<u>less</u>, happi<u>ness</u>, short<u>en</u>,* etc.

- **Derivational Affixes**

Derivational morphemes are used to make new words by changing their meaning or different grammatical category. Derivational morphemes form new words with a meaning and category distinct through the addition of affixes.

The derivational morphemes '-ness' changes 'kind' into an adjective 'kindness', the noun 'care' becomes the adjective 'careless'.

A list of derivational morphemes will include suffixes and prefixes (such as *re-, pre-, ex-, mis-, co-, un-,* etc.)

Derivational morphemes make new words by changing <u>their meaning</u> or <u>grammatical category</u>.

- **Inflectional Affixes**

Inflectional morphemes are not used to produce new words rather indicate the aspects of the grammatical function of the word.

For instance, inflectional morphemes are indicated whether a word is <u>singular</u> or <u>plural</u> if it is <u>past tense</u> or not, and if it is <u>comparative</u> or <u>possessive</u> forms. English has **<u>eight inflectional</u> <u>morphemes</u>** (inflections) all of which are suffixes.

Inflectional morphemes:

- **Nouns:**

plural (-s):   *the watches*

possessive: *Jack's courses*

- **Verbs:**

3rd person singular number non-past (-s):   *Jack teaches English well.*

present participles (-ing):   *He is writing.*

past participle (-en/-ed)   *He has written a book.*

- **Adjectives:**

comparative: (-er):   *John is stronger than before.*

superlative: (-est):   *He is the tallest person in my family.*

Examples:

- *Mark's two sisters are really great.*

-'s (possessive) *Mark's,*   -s (plural) *sisters*   attached to a noun

- *He likes holidays and he is always having fun.*

-s (3-rd person singular) *likes,*   -ing   (present participle) *having*

An **inflectional morpheme** never changes the grammatical category of a word.

For example, both *old* and *older* are adjectives. The **-er** inflection here just creates a different version of the adjective.

A **derivational morpheme** can change the grammatical category of a word. The verb *work* becomes the noun *worker.* If we add the derivational morpheme **-er** just because two morphemes look the same (-*er*), it doesn't mean they do the same kind of work.

Whenever there is a derivational suffix and an inflectional suffix attached to the same word, they always appear in that order. First the derivational (-*er*) is attached to *work*, then the inflectional (-*s*) is added to produce *worker*.

- *The child's wildness shocked the teachers.*

The	child	-'s	wild	-ness	shock	-ed
functional	lexical	inflectional	lexical	derivational	lexical	inflectional

the	teach	-er	-s.
functional	lexical	*derivational*	*inflectional*

Morphology: complications

We have only considered examples of English words in which the different morphemes are easily _identifiable_ as separate elements. The inflectional morpheme -*s* is added to *car* and we get the plural *cars*. What is the inflectional morpheme that makes **sheep** the plural of **sheep**, or **men** the plural of **man**? -**al** is the derivational suffix added to the stem **institution** to give us **institutional,** can we take -*al* off the word **legal** to get the stem **leg**? "No". There are also other problematic cases, especially in the analysis of different languages.

In English: the relationship between **law** and **legal** is a reflection of the historical influence of different languages on English word forms. The modern form *law* is a result of a borrowing into Old English (*lagu*) from a Scandinavian source over 1,000 years ago. The modern word *legal* was borrowed about 500 years later from the Latin form *legalis* ('of the law'). Consequently, there is no derivational relationship between the noun *law* and the adjective *legal* in English, nor between the noun *mouth* (from Old English) and the adjective *oral* (a Latin borrowing). It has been pointed out that an extremely large number of English words owe their morphological patterning to languages like Latin and Greek. Consequently, a full description of English morphology will have to take account of both historical influences and the effect of borrowed elements.

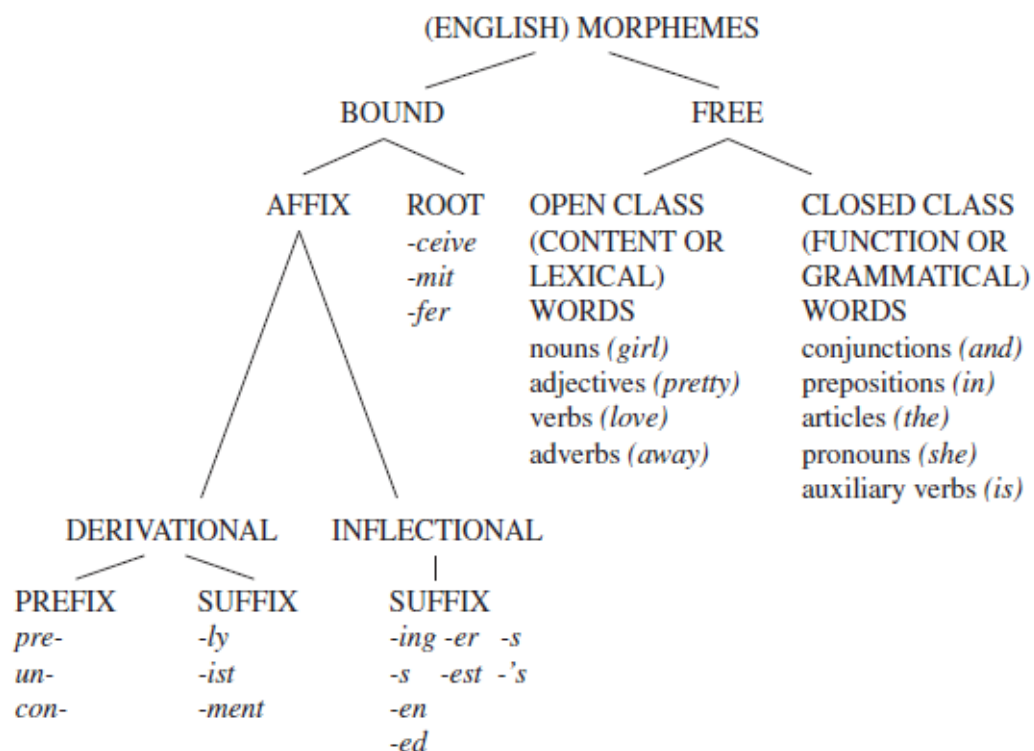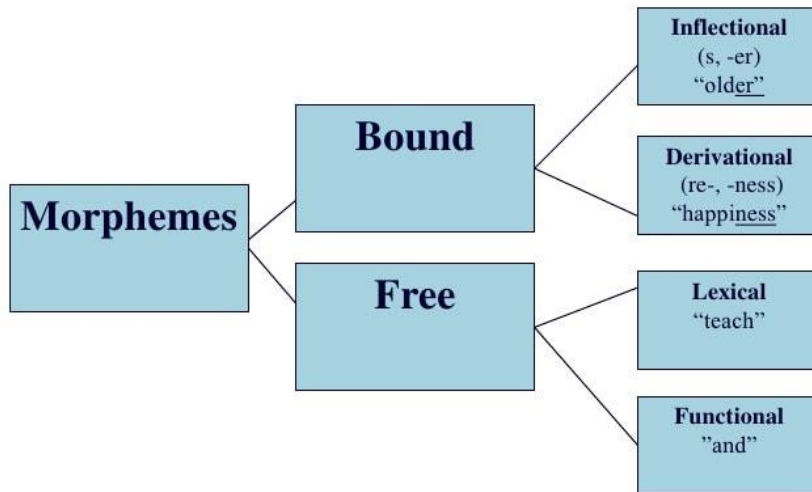# A Useful Way to Remember Different Types of Morphemes (Yule, 2010)

		Inflectional (s, -er) "old**er**"
	Bound	Derivational (re-, -ness) "happi**ness**"
Morphemes		
	Free	Lexical "teach"
		Functional "and"

```
                        (ENGLISH) MORPHEMES
                   _____|_____
                  |                                 |
                BOUND                              FREE
            _____|_____                 _____|_____
           |             |               |                   |
        AFFIX          ROOT         OPEN CLASS          CLOSED CLASS
          /\           -ceive      (CONTENT OR         (FUNCTION OR
         /  \          -mit        LEXICAL)            GRAMMATICAL)
        /    \         -fer        WORDS               WORDS
       /      \                    nouns (girl)        conjunctions (and)
      /        \                   adjectives (pretty) prepositions (in)
     /          \                  verbs (love)        articles (the)
    /            \                 adverbs (away)      pronouns (she)
                                                       auxiliary verbs (is)
DERIVATIONAL    INFLECTIONAL
   / \               |
PREFIX SUFFIX      SUFFIX
pre-   -ly         -ing -er  -s
un-    -ist        -s   -est -'s
con-   -ment       -en
                   -ed
```

FIGURE 3.1 | Classification of English morphemes.

- Free and bound morphemes

creating	**waiter**
create (F), ing (B)	wait (F), er (B)
poetic	**keys**
poet (F) ic (B)	key (F), s (B)
unhealthy	**reconsider**
un (B), health (F) y (B)	re (B), consider (F)