

Morphemes and Morphology

LING 201

16 April 2024

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Quiz

1. What is the lexicon? What goes into a lexical entry?
2. What is inflection? Provide two inflectional affixes in English.
3. What's the difference between bound and free morphemes? Give an example of each.

Heads up

- Scam email going around to students' inboxes with the subject line "IT SERVICE CENTER: Support of Office 365/OneDrive"
- Dear CUNY Students,
This is the last time we will notify you that we'll stop processing incoming emails in your school account, and the reason is you failed to verify your Microsoft account which may lead to the permanent deletion of your account...

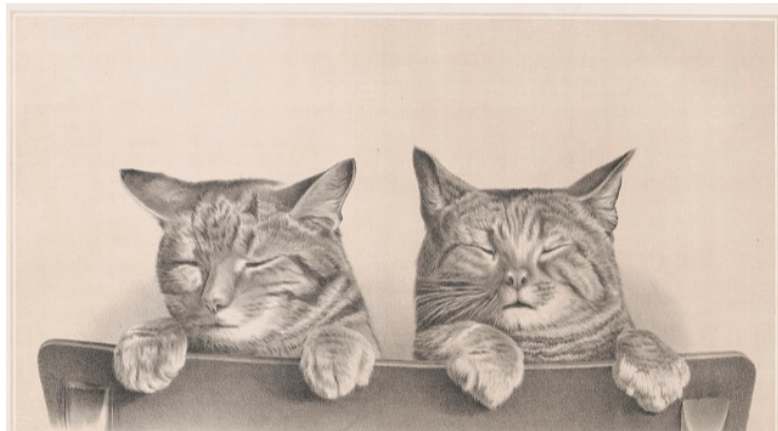
This is a phishing attempt. Do not click any links in that email.

What we'll cover tonight

1. What is morphology?
2. What are words?
3. What's in a word?
4. What kinds of words are there?
5. Practice
6. Recap

What is morphology?

- The study of words and word-parts.
- These word-parts are called morphemes.
- A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language.
- Each word contains at least one morpheme.



cat has one morpheme

cats has two morphemes:
cat and the plural *-s*

What is morphology?

- How many morphemes are in *category*?
- How about *catastrophe*?
- Not all “cat”s are *cats*.

- What’s another word with one morpheme?
- What’s another word with two morphemes?
- How many morphemes are there in:

dog dogs doghouse sit sitter dog sitter giraffe



Not Me:

category

catastrophe

cattle

catalogue

cater

scatter

What is morphology?

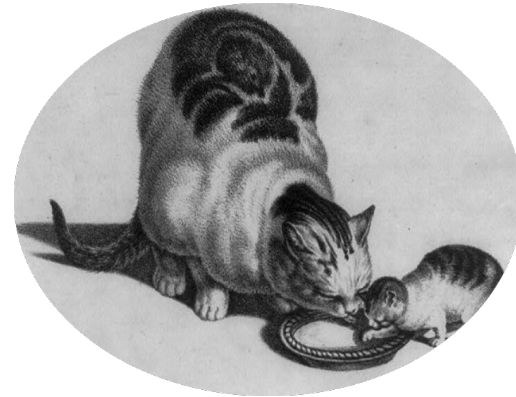
Sing has one morpheme



singer has two morphemes:
sing and the “one who does something” -*er*



moth has one morpheme



How many morphemes does
mother have?

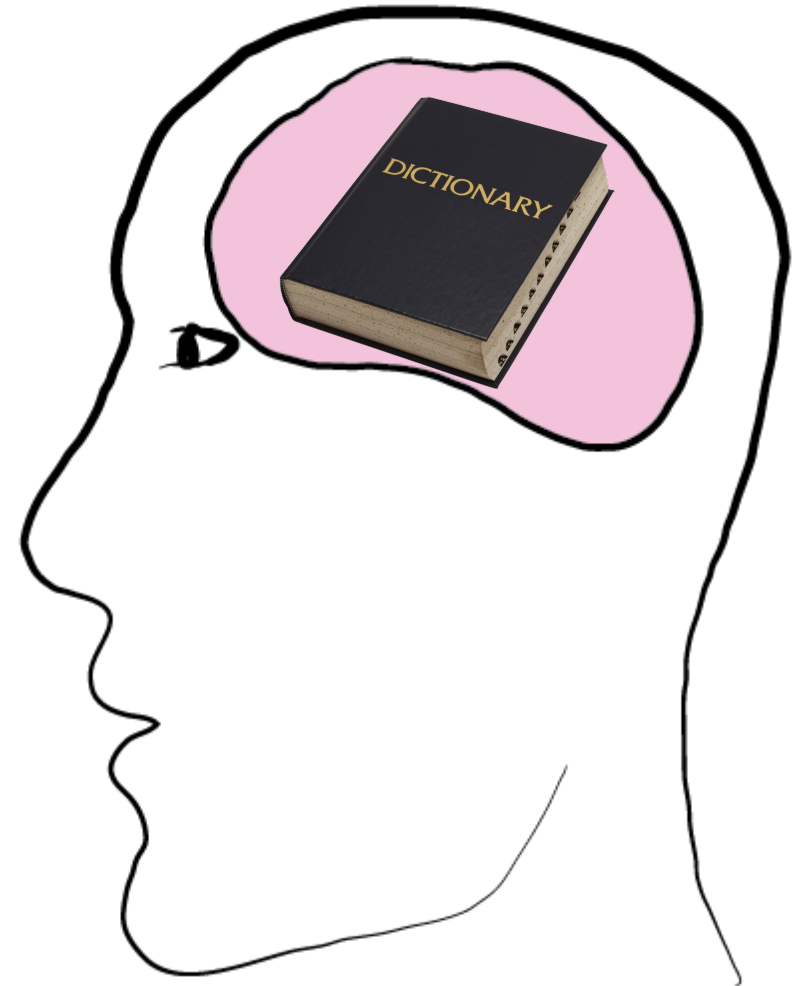
One, even though it ends in *er* –
it’s not “one who moths”

The Lexicon

- What is the *lexicon*?

[...] a sort of mental dictionary that language users—both speakers and hearers—have internalized as part and parcel of acquiring their particular language.
(p.155)

- What is stored in the lexicon?
- Words!
- Or, more specifically, *lexical entries*.



What's in a word?

- Words are stored in the lexicon – your mental dictionary.
- Words have **form**, **meaning**, and a **lexical category**.
- **Form**: pronunciation, spelling, gesture.
- **Meaning**: definition.
- **Lexical category**: part of speech (noun, verb, etc.)



Form:

moth /mɑθ/ or /mɒθ/

Meaning:

nocturnal flying insect with powdery wings.

Lexical category:

Noun



Lexical Entry

- Form:

/kæt/

- Meaning:

Small quadrupedal mammal with whiskers and pointy ears that meows and purrs.

- Lexical category:

Noun



Lexical Entry

- Form:
/dag/ or /dɔg/
- Meaning:
Small to medium mammal
that barks and growls.
- Lexical category:
Noun

What's in a word?

- As said before, each word has at least one morpheme.
- Depending on a word's **lexical category**, certain morphemes can be added to it.
- For example, many verbs can take *-er* “one who does something.”
sing-er, wash-er, drink-er, work-er, bake-(e)r
- Other lexical categories cannot take this suffix.
- Making a new word by adding morphemes to an existing word is called **derivation**.
- In addition to filling in a word's lexical entry, we should be able to identify the morphemes it's made up of.



Form: farmer /fɑ:mə/

Meaning: one who farms

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

two: farm 'to sow & harvest crops'
+ -er 'one who does the verb'



Form: bicycle /baɪsɪkəl/

Meaning: two-wheeled vehicle you pedal

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: two: bi 'two' + cycle 'wheel'

What's in a word?

- **Affixes** are morphemes that get added to a root or word. (You probably know prefix and suffix – two types of affixes.)
- Most affixes are **derivational**. They alter the meaning and lexical category of a word, thus creating a new word.
farm is a verb meaning ‘to sow & harvest crops’ + -er = *farmer*, a noun meaning ‘one who sows & harvests crops’
- Some are **inflectional**. They don't create a new word, but change grammatical information about a word.
cat is a noun meaning ‘small housepet’ + -s = *cats*, the same noun but plural instead of singular

This means that *cats* is part of the same lexical entry as *cat*!

What's in a word?

- Morphemes can be **free** or **bound**.
- Free morphemes may appear on their own, as their own words.
- Bound morphemes must appear in connection with another morpheme.



farm

free or bound?

free!

-er

free or bound?

bound!



bi-

free or bound?

bound!

-cycle

free or bound?

bound!

What kinds of words are there?

Every word belongs to a **lexical category**.

- Nouns ‘apple’ ‘armadillo’ ‘liberty’
- Verbs ‘run’ ‘play’ ‘consider’
- Adjectives ‘blue’ ‘octagonal’ ‘unbelievable’
- Adverbs ‘quickly’ ‘fast’ ‘yesterday’
- Prepositions ‘for’ ‘under’ ‘from’
- Determiners ‘the’ ‘a’ ‘his’
- Pronouns ‘she’ ‘him’ ‘it’
- Conjunctions ‘and’ ‘but’ ‘because’

What kinds of words are there?

Every word belongs to a **lexical category**.

- **Nouns**
 - **Verbs**
 - **Adjectives**
 - Adverbs
 - Prepositions
 - Determiners
 - Pronouns
 - Conjunctions
- We'll be dealing with these three.
- 'apple' 'cardinals' 'liberty'
'blue' 'octagonal' 'unbelievable'
'quickly' 'fast' 'yesterday'
'for' 'under' 'from'
'the' 'a' 'his'
'she' 'him' 'it'
'and' 'but' 'because'

What kinds of words are there?

- Some words are monomorphemic. They contain a single morpheme.
- Some words are polymorphemic. They have two or more morphemes. Of these words, some have **free** roots.

un- + **speak** + -able

farm + -er

‘unable to be spoken’

‘one who farms’

- Some have **bound** roots. A bound root cannot appear as its own word.

psych + -ology

mono- + **graph**

‘study of the mind’

‘book on a single subject’



Form: anteater /æntitəɪ/

Meaning: animal that eats ants

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

three: *ant* + *eat* + *-er* 'one who does the verb'



Form: raccoon /ɹækʊn/

Meaning: nocturnal mammal with a mask

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: one: *raccoon*



Form: musicians /mjuzɪʃɪnz/

Meaning: people who play music

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

three: *music* + *-ian* 'one who does something'
+ *-s* 'plural'



Form: drummer /dʌmɹə/

Meaning: one who plays a drum or drums

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: two: *drum* + *-er* 'one who does the verb'



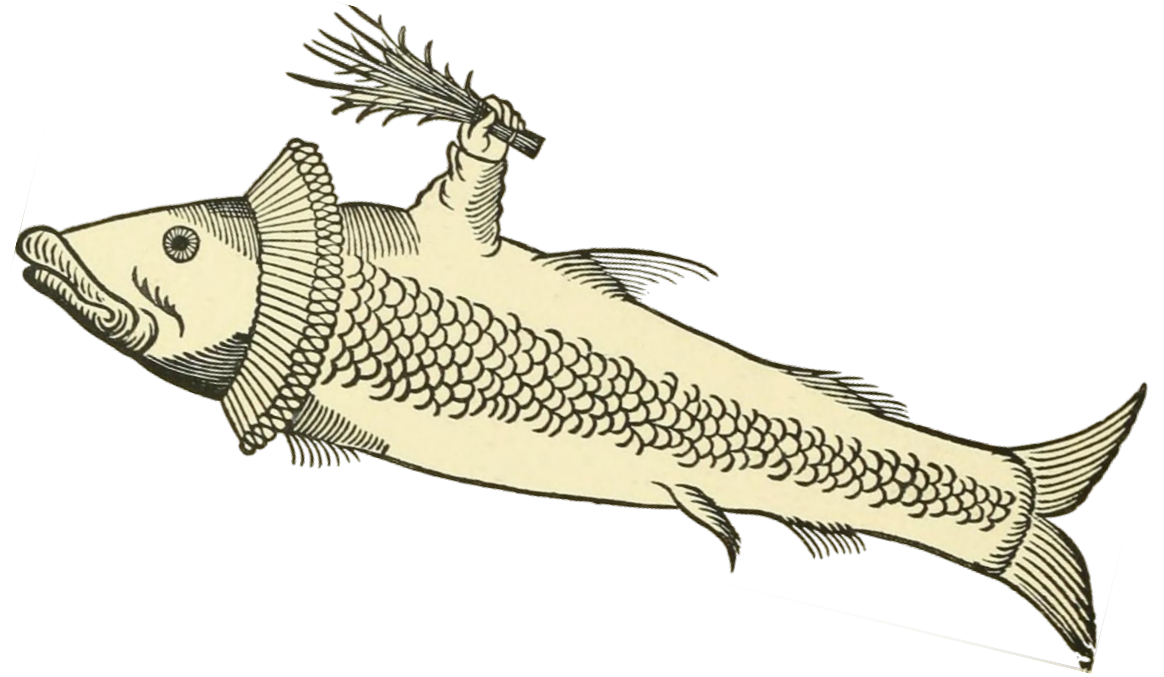
Form: athletic /æθlətɪk/

Meaning: skilled, like an athlete

Lexical category: adjective

Morphemes:

two: *athlete* + *-ic* 'like the noun'



Form: unbelievable /ʌnbəlivəbəl/

Meaning: impossible to take seriously

Lexical category: adjective

Morphemes:

three: *un-* 'not' + *believe* + *-able* 'able to be verbed'

More practice...

- untrustworthy 4 morphemes
- trust
- worth un trust worth y
- worthy

- gargantuan 1 morpheme
- ant farm 2 morphemes
- serge 1 morpheme
- ant 1 morpheme
- sergeant 1 morpheme

Working in groups, create:

- 3 words with one morpheme
- 3 words with two morphemes
- 3 words with three morphemes

Identify all of the morphemes in your words.

Then, we'll all try to figure out the morphemic structures of each group's words.

Quick review

- All words are made up of morphemes.
- Morphemes are the smallest meaningful unit in a language.
- Each word has at least one morpheme.
- Each morpheme is either free or bound.
- Each word has form, meaning, and a lexical category.
- You should be able to identify a word's **form**, **meaning**, and **lexical category**, as well as how many morphemes it has.

For next time...

- Note that we don't meet again until May 7th, after Spring Break.
- Read pp.21–28 and 33–36 in Rickerson & Hilton and pp.131–137 in David Crystal. These are about language change.
- Extra Credit: 2 different options. One is about morphology, one is about phonology. Full instructions on the class website.