

ANALYTICAL COMPONENTS OF MORPHOLOGY IN LINGUISTICS



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Abstract

Sounds are combined into words to convey meaning. But words are not the smallest unit of meaning. Many words are made of smaller units of meaning, and these units are combined in particular ways, forming words. Morphology is the study of these meaning-bearing units and the rules governing them, the study of the structure of words. In the study of morphology, linguists try to account for the changes in suffixes, facts with general rules etc.

Key words: morphology, word-building, inflection, derivation

Introduction

The term 'morphology' takes its origin from '*morph*' (means form, shape etc.) and '*-ology*' (means study of something). German linguist August Schleicher named morphology as a sub-discipline of linguistics in 1859 for the first time. Year after year it has evolved as one of the major part of linguistics. It is the study of internal structure of words which are the smallest independent units of language.

Morphology deals with the structure of words. Look at the words: *knowing*, *knowingly*, *unknowingly*. The last two words can be subdivided as *knowing* and *-ly*, and *unknowing*



and *-ly*. Here *un-*, *knowing*, and *-ly* are called morphemes. A morpheme can be defined as the minimal meaningful unit that cannot be further subdivided. The study of morphemes is called Morphology. The structuralists were interested in defining a unit of language that did bear meaning; so they proposed the concept of a morpheme. As mentioned above, a morpheme is the smallest meaning-bearing unit of language. For example, *re-* is not a word, but it does carry meaning. A morpheme consists of a sequence of one or more phonemes. The word 'morpheme' itself is composed of two morphemes i.e. '*morph*' which comes from the Greek word meaning 'form' and '*-eme*' which is also found in 'phoneme', 'lexeme' etc. The exact meaning of '*-eme*' is difficult to characterize outside linguistic theory.

Types of Morphemes

When we analyze the words, we understand that many words are themselves morphemes, such as {strong} and {food}; they cannot be broken into smaller units that in themselves carry meaning. Most of the compound words such as '*mailbox*' are created by joining two morphemes together. Here 'mail' and 'box' can be recognized as a word that carries a meaning by itself. Such morphemes are known as 'free morphemes' as they can exist as independent words. Therefore, a free morpheme is one that can be spoken with meaning in normal speech. They exist as words of English and can stand alone. They can be used in sentences without attaching any extra morphemes to them.

There is another type of morpheme which occurs only when attached to another morpheme. This type of morpheme includes all prefixes and suffixes, like {pre-}, {re-}, {-ness}, {-ly} etc. It means that they have no independent existence of its own. Such morphemes are called 'bound morphemes'. Among the examples that were mentioned above, '*knowing*' is a free morpheme whereas '*un-*' and '*-ly*' are bound morphemes. They occur only as a proper sub-part of a word. They cannot exit alone as they are not proper words of English. The analysis of a word into its component morphemes requires that



each morpheme occur elsewhere in the language. It must occur with the same meaning either as free morpheme or as a bound morpheme in other combinations.

Analyzing morphemes should be done with utmost care as it may lead to the tendency to overanalyze a word – to subdivide it into elements that do not contribute to the meaning of the word. Let us take the words ‘replayed’ and ‘regained’. The bound morpheme {re-} gives the same meaning in both the words. What about the word ‘regarded’? It may be divided into two morphemes such as {regard} and {-ed}; but if we continue dividing it into {re-} and {gard}, we commit a big mistake as ‘re-’ in ‘regard’ does not carry the meaning of repetition, as it did in ‘replayed’ and ‘regained’.

The bound morphemes which are added to the free morphemes are known as ‘affixes’. They include prefixes, suffixes and infixes. This leads to the formation of complex and compound words. ‘knowingly’ and ‘unknowingly’ are examples of complex words as they contain one or more bound forms; but ‘mailbox’ and ‘sandstone’ are compound words which are made up wholly of smaller words (free morphemes). The way in which morphemes are put together in a complex or a compound word is called a ‘Morphological Construction.’ We call it a ‘stem’ to which an affix is added. It can also be the root. In a word like ‘*socialized*’, the root is ‘social’. It is also a stem because we add the suffix –ize to form ‘socialize’. Again the unit ‘socialize’ is also a stem as the suffix ‘-ed’ is added to it. Therefore:

Social : root (no affix is added)

Social + ize : stem+suffix (affixation takes place)

Socialize + ed: stem+suffix

Traditional grammarians distinguish two important types of morphological operation: derivation and inflection. Derivational and inflectional morphemes come from bound morphemes. **A derivational morpheme** is one that is added to a root to form a new word that differs in its part-of-speech classification. For instance, when the suffix –ness is



added to the adjective 'happy', the formation of a noun occurs i.e. 'happiness'. In a similar way, an adjective turns into an adverb by adding *-ly*. Here change of part-of-speech classification occurs. There's a different case of adding the prefixes '*un-*' and '*pre-*': happy – unhappy, determined – predetermined. Change of meaning is quite tangible here, but the part-of-speech remains the same. In English, prefixes are usually derivational morphemes that change the meaning but not the part-of-speech, whereas suffixes are usually derivational morphemes that change the part-of-speech classification but not the meaning. A few exceptions may be found as it happens everywhere. Derivational suffixes change the base into a different word class. They change adjectives into nouns (happy+ness=happiness), nouns into adjectives (sorrow+ful=sorrowful), verbs into nouns (retire+ment=retirement), and adjectives into adverbs (slow+ly=slowly). The words formed with the addition of derivational suffixes are called derived words and the morphological construction is known as derivational.

Another type of morphological operation is inflection. **An inflectional morpheme** indicates certain grammatical properties associated with nouns and verbs, such as gender, number, case and tense. In English, the inflectional morphemes are all suffixes. The suffix *-s* which indicates either possession or plurality in nouns, is an inflectional morpheme; the suffix *-ed*, which is used to add to the verbs for the formation of past tense is another one. Inflectional affixes modify a word's form and change the grammatical subclass of the word. The examples are *boys* and *played* i.e. adding *-s* to form plurality and *-ed* for the past tense respectively. It may also be remembered that an inflectional suffix comes at the end of the word and no other suffix can be added to the word further. It does not change the part-of-speech of the word like derivational affixes.

Morphological processes

Word formation started to attract the attention of linguists as a consequence of Chomsky's publication in 1970 (Joaquin A. 1991). It is with a well established theory of word formation that a complete theory of a language is formed. Lexis undergoes a lot of processes before



it gives birth to new ones. Morphological processes are the methods in which new words are formed. They are various processes by which words can be built in any language.

The different devices are the following:

1. Suffixes
2. Prefixes
3. Infixes
4. Reduplication
5. Compounding
6. Internal change
7. Backformation
8. Shortening of bases
9. Suppletion
10. Alphabet-based formation

Morphological importance in Grammar

The statement that morphology is an interface between different components of grammar is believed to be raised by the linguists. Morphology doesn't exist as a separate independent component. Being the study of the structure of words, Morphology works as a platform to link many other constituents of language. Transformational-generative grammar had not much to say about morphology. They could not draw clear dividing line between the different aspects of morphology and the theories of phonology and syntax. Such grammarians express the speaker's knowledge by means of rules. Word-formation was considered as a productive morphological process in which new words were formed using *-ize* attachment. For example, the adjective 'social' can be turned into a verb by adding '*-ize*', and thus forming a new word 'socialize'. This rule states that an operation is added to the base which should be one of the major components of grammar such as noun, adjective, verb or adverb. Another type of rule called Adjustment rule says that it may change the shape of certain morphemes. For example, 'society' is formed by adding



'-ety' to the word 'social'. There are many examples that can be shown supporting this rule.

Conclusion

Knowledge of morphology is very useful for the one who wants to learn more about a language. Linguists and teachers are interested in the study of this branch because they know that it is the only way to find out more about the strategies to increase the lexical capacity of the speaker. Linguistics is the scientific study of a language; and, therefore, morphology is one of the dominant components of linguistics. This helps one to enlarge his vocabulary with the use of affixes and facilitates the understanding of meanings of words. The creation of new words and the modification of existing words are always materialized through the key component of linguistics i.e. morphology.

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