

College of Education

University for Humanities Department of English

Post-Graduate Studies



A Course in Morphology and Syntax

M.A. Methodology

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Basic concepts: What is Morphology?

Word, word-form and lexeme

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Morphology

Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words and the systematic relationship between the form and meaning of words. It examines how words are formed from smaller units called morphemes. The term "morphology" is relatively recent, emerging in the second half of the 19th century. Previously, the study of word structure was encompassed within "grammar".

It is both one of the oldest and one of the youngest branches of grammar. It is considered old because early linguistic scholars primarily focused on analyzing word structures (morphology). However, while the concepts of sound structure (phonology) and sentence structure (syntax) were established fields of study for centuries, the specific term "morphology" itself is relatively recent. Therefore, while the study of word forms is ancient, the formal discipline of morphology is quite young.

Internal Structure of Words:

Words have internal phonological structure (sequences of sounds) and morphological structure (meaningful units). The English word *nuts* consists of the four sounds (or, as we will say, phonological segments) [n] [ʌ] [t] [s]. Phonological segments (sounds) themselves don't typically carry meaning, but they differentiate words. Morphological structure arises when variations in word forms correlate with changes in meaning. But often formal variations in the shapes of words correlate systematically with semantic changes. For instance, the words *nuts*, *nights*, *necks*, *backs*, *taps* (and so on) share not only a phonological segment (the final [s]), but also a semantic component: they all refer to a multiplicity of entities from the same class.

BASIC CONCEPTS

Mental lexicon are Words stored somewhere in our heads.

Orthographic word

is simply a word as it appears in written form, separated by spaces from other words. It's the most basic way we recognize words in writing. For example, in the sentence "The cat sat on the mat", there are six orthographic words: "The", "cat", "sat", "on", "the", and "mat". Each word is separated by spaces.

A word is an uninterrupted string of letters which is preceded by a blank space and followed either by a blank space or a punctuation mark .

Ex1: Linguistics is a fascinating subject .

We count 5 orthographic words .Consider the following example, and try to determine how many words there are:

Ex2: Benjamin's girlfriend lives in a high-rise apartment building .

Your result depends on a number of assumptions :

1-If you consider apostrophes to be punctuation marks, Benjamin's constitutes two (orthographic) words. If not, Benjamin's is one word.

2-If you consider a hyphen a punctuation mark, high-rise is two (orthographic) words, otherwise it's one (orthographic) word.

3-The last two strings, apartment building, are easy to classify, they are two (orthographic) words, whereas girlfriend must be considered one (orthographic) word There are two basic problems with our orthographic analysis.

1-Orthography is often variable. Thus, The notion of what a word is, should, after all, not depend on the fancies of individual writers or the arbitrariness of the English spelling system.

2-It may not always coincide with our intuitions. Thus, most of us would probably agree that girlfriend is a word (i.e. one word) which consists of two words (girl and friend), a so called compound .

a) If compounds are one word, they should be spelled without a blank space separating the elements that together make up the compound.

b) Unfortunately, this is not the case. The compound apartment building, for example, has a blank space between apartment and building.

To summarize our discussion of purely orthographic criteria of wordhood, we must say that these criteria are not entirely reliable. Furthermore, a purely orthographic notion of word would have the disadvantage of implying that illiterate speakers would have no idea about what a word might be. This is obviously false.

It has been argued that the word could be defined in four other ways:

1. in terms of sound structure (i.e. phonologically) sees words as linguistic unit

2. in terms of its internal integrity sees words as an indivisible unit

3. in terms of meaning (i.e. semantically) A unified semantic concept

4. in terms of sentence structure (i.e. syntactically). A smallest elements in a sentence

You might have thought that the blank spaces in writing reflect pauses in the spoken language, and that:

□ perhaps one could define the word as a unit in speech surrounded by pauses.

□, if you carefully listen to naturally occurring speech you will realize that speakers do not make pauses before or after each word.

□ Perhaps we could say that words can be surrounded by potential pauses in speech.

□ This criterion works much better, but it runs into problems because speakers can and do make pauses not only between words but also between syllables, for example for emphasis.

In terms of Sound structure

Another way of how the sound structure can tell us something about the nature of the word as a linguistic unit . In many languages (including English) the word is the unit that is crucial for the occurrence and distribution of stress. Spoken in isolation, every word can have only one main stress, as indicated by the acute accents

cárpenter

téxtbook understand

análysis

The main stressed syllable is the syllable which is the most prominent one in a word .Prominence of a syllable is a function of loudness, pitch and duration, with stressed syllables being pronounced louder, with higher pitch, or with longer duration than the neighboring syllable(s). Longer words often have additional, weaker stresses, so called secondary stresses, example bellow shows that the phonologically defined word is not always identical with the orthographically defined word. apártment building Bénjamin's

While apártment building is two orthographic words, it is only one word in terms of stress behavior .The stress criterion is not readily applicable to function words and to words that hang on to other words, so-called clitics (e.g. ‘ve, ‘s, ‘ll).

In terms of Internal Integrity

1-which says that the word is an indivisible unit into which no intervening material may be inserted.

2-If some modificational element is added to a word, it must be done at the edges, but never inside the word.

For example, plural endings such as -s in girls, negative elements such as un- in uncommon or endings that create verbs out of adjectives (such as -ize in colonialize) never occur inside the word they modify, but are added either before or after the word.

Hence, the impossibility of formations such as *gi-s-rl, *com-un-mon, *col-ize-onial .There are some cases in which word integrity is violated.

1-For example, the plural of son-in-law is not *son-in-laws but sons-in-law. Under the assumption that son-in-law is one word (i.e. some kind of compound), the plural ending is inserted inside the word and not at the end.

2-Other words that violate the integrity criterion for words.

For example, in creations like abso-bloody-lutely, the element bloody is inserted inside the word, and not, as we would expect, at one of the edges. . In fact, it is impossible to add bloody before or after absolutely in order to achieve the same effect. Absolutely bloody would mean something completely different, and *bloody absolutely seems utterly strange and, above all, uninterpretable.

- We can conclude that there are certain, though marginal counterexamples to the integrity criterion, but surely these cases should be regarded as the proverbial exceptions that prove the rule.

In terms of meaning

The semantic definition of word states that a word expresses a unified semantic concept. Although this may be true for most words (even for son-in-law, which is ill-behaved with regard to the integrity criterion), it