

Carstairs-McCarty, Andrew (2002): "A word and its parts: roots, affixes and their shapes". In: *An Introduction to English Morphology*. Edinburgh: EUP, 16-27.

Words can be decomposed ('segmented') into smaller parts: **morphemes**

- **Semantic predictability:** (most) complex words need not be listed in LEX as suggested by the fact that their meaning is *predictable from their components* (morphemes)

dioeciously: we don't need two entries DIOECIOUS and DIOECIOUSLY, but DIOECIOUS and the manner-adverbial morpheme -LY (*affixal*)

Why don't we have to list words we've never encountered? Key: morphological knowledge (in the cognitive-modular sense):

- **Creativity:** the human mind has a *creative capacity*

① **Productivity:** We can produce sentences/words no one has ever uttered/heard before

Syntax: Ten elephants stole my milk this morning.

Morphology: *un-Clintonish*: 1. $\sqrt{\text{Clinton}}$; 2. Add adjectival <Suff ish>; 3. Add negative <Pref un>

② **Recursion:** We can (theoretically) produce infinitely complex sentences/words out of *finite* means although our brain is finite – it somewhere/somehow contains the ability of infinitude ("infinite use of finite means")!

Syntax: John thinks [that Jill knows [that Jack regrets [that...]]]

Morphology: <anti<anti<anti<...<missile>...>missile>missile>missile>

Words come in variable **complexity**

Note: Morphemes \neq syllables, which are *phonological* units!!!

- **Monomorphemic** words consist of one morpheme
mouse, elephant, drosophila
- **Polymorphemic** words consist of more than one morpheme
fruit fly, greyish, uninteresting, extraordinarily

If morphemes \neq syllables, what counts as a morpheme? Criteria for morphemehood:

- ① Morphemes must be **identifiable** from one word to another (↔ form)
- ② Morphemes must contribute in some way to the **meaning** of the whole word (↔ 'smallest meaningful unit')

greyish: <-ish> is a morpheme because it is identifiable (recurs) in different words (*greyish, yellow-ish, Neven-ish,...*) – it is *productive* –, and it contributes to the meaning of the whole word ('property of being grey is approximate')

elephant: neither *<e>, *<le> nor *<phant> is identifiable/meaning-contributing

Note: As we will see, there's *no necessary/logical connection* between criteria ① and ②, only a correlation! Especially ② is a somewhat unstable criterion.

Kinds of morphemes: morphemes can be classified along two dimensions, the way how they relate to other morphemes (free, bound, prefix, suffix,...), and w.r.t. their contents ("meaning", i.e. functional/grammatical vs. lexical/substantive)

① **Free morphemes (stems/roots/bases)**: core/starting point for formation of words, can stand alone

② **Bound morphemes (affixes)**: cannot stand alone

Problem: inherited (Germ.) vs. borrowed vocabulary (Fr., Lat.)

en-large vs. *magn-ify* – <en> and <ify> are affixes that both transform an adjectival stem into a verb denoting 'make sth. property x', but the stem *<magn> cannot stand free, doesn't have transparent meaning, etc.

☞ **Cranberry** morphemes (morphological **fossils**): roots that have a *very* restricted distribution *cran-berry*, *leg-ible* – exceptionally, cranberry morphemes are **bound roots** in that they cannot occur freely (**I love eating crans!*)

Note: Obviously, cranberry morphemes pose a problem for the criterion of morphemehood based on *meaning*!

Allomorphy

Phonetic variants of morphemes ('morphs') determined by *phonological* context (**morphophonology**)

<PLURAL> → [s]/C_{fortis_#}; [z]/C_{lenis/V_#}; [ɪz]/C_{sibilant_#}

But: While allomorphy is pretty systematic, there are lexically/grammatically determined exceptions:

wife + <plural -s> → [-vz] vs. *wife* + <genitive -s> → [-fs] (*number* vs. *case*)

wife + <plural -s> → [-vz] vs. *oaf* + <plural -s> → [-fs] (*lexical item* vs. *lexical item*)

Prefix <re->: *return* [rə-] vs. *re-turn* [ri:-], the latter fully productive (you can apply it to almost any verb) – same historical source, but different synchronic ('now') morphological status (fossilised, semantically bleached prefix vs. productive prefix)

form-based criterion for morphemehood more adequate than meaning-based one

"Latin-derived prefixes and roots that we have been considering have so extensively lost any clearly identifiable meanings as to enforce lexical listing for all words formed with them." [p. 26]