

# **THE STRUCTURE OF WORDS**

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# MORPHOLOGY

- Morphology deals with the syntax of complex words and parts of words, also called **morphemes**, as well as with the semantics of their lexical meanings. Understanding how words are formed and what semantic properties they convey through their forms enables human beings to easily recognize individual words and their meanings in discourse.

# Free and Bound Morpheme

- Analysis at a morphological level is concerned with structural elements of meaning called **morphemes**. Morphemes are classified into two types:
- **Free Morphemes:** girl, boy, mother, etc. These are words with a complete meaning, so they can stand alone as an independent word in a sentence.

**Bound Morphemes:** These are lexical items incorporated into a word as a dependent part. They cannot stand alone, but must be connected to another morpheme.

Bound morphemes operates in the connection processes by means of **derivation, inflection, and compounding**.

# DERIVATIONAL MORPHOLOGY

- **Derivation** is concerned with the way morphemes are connected to existing lexical forms as **affixes**.
- We distinguish affixes in two principal types:
- 1. **Prefixes** - attached at the beginning of a lexical item or base-morpheme – ex: un-, pre-, post-, dis, im-, etc.
- 2. **Suffixes** – attached at the end of a lexical item ex: -age, -ing, -ful, -able, -ness, -hood, -ly, etc.

# EXAMPLES OF MORPHOLOGICAL DERIVATION

- a. Lexical item (free morpheme): **like** (verb)=piacere  
+ prefix (bound morpheme) **dis-**  
= dislike (verb) = detestare;
- b. Lexical item: **like** (verbo)= piacere  
+ suffix **-able** = likeable (agg)= simpatico  
+ prefix **un-** =unlikeable (agg)= antipatico  
+ suffix **-ness** = unlikeableness (sost)= antipatia

- 3. Lexical item: **like** (agg)= simile
  - + prefix **un-** = unlike (agg)= dissimile
  - + suffix **-ness** = unlikeness (sost) = dissimilarità;
- 4. Lexical item: **like** (agg)= simile
  - + suffix **-ly** = likely (agg)= probabile e (avv) probabilmente
  - + suffix **-hood** =likelihood (sost)= probabilità
  - + prefix **un-** =unlikelihood (sost)= improbabilità.

Derivational affixes can cause semantic change:

Prefix **pre-** means *before*; **post-** means *after*; **un-** means *not*, **re-** means *again*.

Prefix = fixed *before*; Unhappy = *not* happy = sad; Retell = tell *again*.

Prefix **de-** added to a verb conveys a sense of subtraction; **dis-** and **un-** have a sense of negativity.

To decompose; to defame; to uncover; to discover.



# INFLECTIONAL MORPHOLOGY

- Inflection is a morphological process that adapts existing words so that they function effectively in sentences without changing the category of the base morpheme. English has the following inflectional suffixes:

# VERB INFLECTIONAL SUFFIXES

- 1. The suffix –s functions in the Present Simple as the third person marking of the verb : to work – he work-s
- 2. The suffix –ed functions in the past simple as the past tense marker in regular verbs: to love – lov-ed
- 3. The suffixes –ed (regular verbs) and –en (for some regular verbs) function in the marking of the past participle and, in general, in the marking of the perfect aspect:  
To study studied studied / To eat ate eaten
- 4. The suffix –ing functions in the marking of the present participle, the gerund and in the marking of the continuous aspect: To eat – eating / To study - studying

# NOUN INFLECTIONAL SUFFIXES

- 5. The suffix –s functions in the marking of the plural of nouns:  
dog – dogs
- 6. The suffix –s functions as a possessive marker (saxon genitive): Laura – Laura's book.

# ADJECTIVE INFLECTIONAL SUFFIXES

7. The suffix **–er** functions as comparative marker: quick – quicker
8. The suffix **–est** functions as superlative marker: quick - quickest

# Derivational affixes can mark category change

- The derivational suffix **–able** derives an adjective from a verb, implying an ability with a passive relation with its stem:

**Eatable** means able to be eaten

(commestibile), not able to eat.

- Suffix **–er** derives a noun from a verb, indicating a human agent or an inanimate instrument:

**Speaker** (parlante o amplificatore); **Baker** (fornaio);

- The suffixes **-ful** and **-less** derives an adjective from a noun.
- **-ful** indicates addition, abundance;
- **-less** indicates subtraction, reduction:

careful = full of care

careless = with no care

- The suffixes **-ure** and **-age** derive a noun from a verb:

To fail – failure = fallire/fallimento

To marry – marriage = sposare/matrimonio

- The suffix **-hood** derives an abstract noun from a concrete noun, the suffix **-ness** derives an abstract noun from an adjective.

Child – childhood = bambino/infanzia

Good – goodness = buono/bontà

- The suffix **-ly** derives an adverb from an adjective (but also adjs can end in **-ly**):

Quick – quickly

Easy – easily

but: lonely (adjective)

- The suffix **-ing** derives a noun from a verb:

To write – writing.