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|  | **Mohamed Kheider University of Biskra** |  |
|  | **Faculty of Arts and Languages** |  |
| **Module: Linguistics** | **Dept. of Arts and Foreign Languages** | **Level: First Year LMD** |
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| **Lecture № 02(a): Morphology** |

**A. Definition of Morphology**

Morphology is the part of [linguistics](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/linguistics/jezykoznawstwo.htm) that deals with the study of words, their internal structure and partially their [meanings](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/linguistics/semantics.htm). It is also interested in how the users of a given language understand complex words and invent new lexical items.

**B. Morpheme, Zero Morphemes, Morph, and Allomorph**

**1. Morpheme**

Morphemes in morphology are the smallest units that carry meaning or fulfill some grammatical function. The word house itself consists of one morpheme, and because it can stand by itself it can be called a ***free morpheme***. In the word houses there are two morphemes house, which is free **morpheme**, and s, which is a ***bound morpheme***, because it cannot stand by itself as it would have no meaning. In the second example above the bound morpheme s was attached to house – a free morpheme, which in this case can be also called a ***stem***. Stem is what a bound morpheme is attached to.

What is more, free morphemes can be subdivided into two categories: ***lexical morphemes*** and ***Functional morphemes***. ***Lexical morphemes*** are words that have some meaning – [verbs](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/verbs.htm), [adjectives](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/adjectives.htm), [nouns](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/nouns.htm), like, for example, print, house, pretty, fire, go, girl. We can add new lexical morphemes to the language rather easily, so they are treated as an ***open class*** of words. On the other hand, ***Functional morphemes*** such as [articles](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/articles.htm), [prepositions](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/prepositions.htm), and [pronouns](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/pronouns.htm) which do not carry any meaning on their own, but only fulfill a grammatical function. Because we almost never add new functional morphemes to the language, they are described as a ***closed class*** of words.

Not only free morphemes are subdivided, there is a similar situation with bound morphemes which are subdivided into derivational and inflectional morphemes. ***Derivational morphemes*** are those morphemes which produce new words, or change the function of a word. It is achieved by means of prefixes or suffixes in case of [English](http://www.tlumaczenia-angielski.info/angielski/angielski.htm) and infixes in other languages, like Arabic. ***Inflectional morphemes*** do not create new words, but only show grammatical functions of a word such as keep**s**, marsh**es**, giv**en**, sing**ing**, and high**er**. A good example of an inflectional language could be Latin which has numerous case endings for nouns, as well as endings for verbs and adjectives.

**2. Zero Morphemes**

There do exist meaningful grammatical features that are not materialized, neither in writing nor in pronunciation. The plural of a noun, for instance, is not always formed by adding a bound morpheme ‘s’ to the word. Some words are not changed at all when meaning the plural. We usually simply understand which case the speaker meant from the context of the conversation. One such example is the word ‘sheep’, designating singular as well as plural sheep. The zero morpheme ‘plural’ would, in this case, designate the abstract concept of the plurality. It then means the plural sheep as opposed to the singular sheep.

**3. Morph**

While morphemes remain ideal ***abstract*** units, the physical realizations of which are called morphs. The corresponding morphs may show some variation. In the case of the plural morpheme, various realizations are possible. For instance in the word ‘dogs’, the morph **s** represents the morpheme ‘plural’ and in the word ‘oxen’ the morph is **en**.

**4. Allomorph**

Several morphs that belong to the same morpheme are also called allomorphs: variants of one morpheme.

For example, all three morphs /z/ (in ‘dogs’ and ‘beds’), /s/ (in ‘cats’), /iz/ (in ‘garages’) are different representations of the same morpheme of plurality.

**B. Word Formation Processes**

Word formation processes are basically how new words are created and become part of the language.

**1. Coinage:** This refers to the creation of totally new terms into a language. Most of them come from the name of the inventors, the products’ names or the company’s name. Examples: Kleenex, Nylon, Aspirin, Microsoft, etc.

**2. Borrowing:** This process refers, as the name claims, when a language ‘borrows’ terms from other languages. Examples: Alcohol (Arabic), Piano (Italian), Yoghurt (Turkish), Robot (Czech), etc.

**3. Compounding:** It refers to the joining of two separate words to produce a single word. The two words don’t lose their individual sounds. Examples: Bookcase, Fingerprint, Sunburn, Basketball, etc.

**4. Blending:** Similar to compounding, blending refers to the joining of two terms; however, in this case one (or both) word(s) lose a sound. Examples: Motel (motor-hotel), Telecast (television-broadcast), Spanglish (Spanish-English), Modem (Modulator-demodulator), etc.

**5. Clipping:** Clipping a synonym of reduction. In this process a word that has more than one syllable is reduced to a shorter form. Examples: Celular (cel), Fanatic (fan), Facebook (Face), etc.

**6. Backformation:** This occurs when a word of one type (usually a noun) is changed to another different type of word (usually a verb). Examples:

* + Donation (n) -donate (v)
	+ Option (n) -Opt (v)
	+ Babysitter (n) -Babysit (v)

**7. Conversion:** This is the change of the function of the word. For example, a noun comes to be used as a verb. Examples: butter, bottle, water, etc.

**8. Affixation:** Affixation is the process where we take a base form word and we add a prefix, infix or suffix. Examples: **mis**lead, **dis**respect**ful**, fool**ishness**, halle**bloody**lujah, etc.

**9. Acronyms:** Sometimes, words are created because of acronyms. Acronyms are abbreviations pronounced as if they were words. Examples: laser (light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation), radar (radio detecting and ranging), scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) and zip (zone improvement plan) code, etc.

**Activity One**

Put the morphemes to be found in these words and phrases in the appropriate column in the table below.

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| **Word/Phrase** | **Derivational Morphemes** | **Free Morphemes** | **Inflectional Morphemes** | **Functional Morphemes** |
| disconnectedness |  |  |  |  |
| allomorphs |  |  |  |  |
| password |  |  |  |  |
| the dearest classmate  |  |  |  |  |
| president’s speech |  |  |  |  |
| Looking glass |  |  |  |  |

**Activity Two**

**B.** Single out the allomorphs that are the physical realizations of the same morpheme in the followings words: **unstable, discourage, abnormal,** and **nonprofit**.

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