

INTERDISCIPLINARY MASTER PROGRAM ON COMPUTATIONAL LINGUISTICS AT CENTRAL ASIAN UNIVERSITIES



English Linguistics

English Morphology
Prof. Isabel Moskowich



UNIVERSIDADE DA CORUÑA

Morphology basic concepts

II

Outline

- What is Morphology? Its branches
- Some concepts: lexeme, morpheme, morph, allomorph, etc.

1. What is Morphology?

Term from Greek *morph* = “form” applied in several fields:

- In **biology** → study of the form and structure of living organisms
- In **geology** → study of the configuration and evolution of the land

- In Linguistics → subfield of Grammar (inside Linguistics) that studies the forms of the smallest linguistic elements

Grammar = Morphology + Syntax

2. Branches of Morphology?

1. Derivational morphology
2. Inflectional morphology (only for inflective languages, i.e.: English, Spanish and other IE languages)

Derivational morphology

Study of how new words are formed from an existing word, often by adding an affix

happiness and *unhappy* derive from *happy*

Inflectional morphology

- Study of the processes that distinguish the forms of words in certain grammatical categories (**complementary distribution**)
- English has a fairly limited inflectional system

English	Spanish
I sing	Yo canto
You sing	Tú cantas
He/she sings	El/ella canta
We sing	Nosotros cantamos
You sing	Vosotros cantáis
They sing	Ellos cantan

English	Spanish
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Compare *sing* vs *sings*

And...

All this shows that language forms (words)
are made of smaller units with different
sorts of meanings

3. Other key concepts

- Lexeme
- Grammatical category
- Morpheme
- Morph
- Allomorph

Lexeme:

- A lexeme is the minimal unit of language which has a semantic interpretation and embodies a distinct cultural concept
- A lexeme is the form conventionally listed in a dictionary as a separate entry

Identify the leeceme in

- Sing
- Sings
- Lap-top
- Morphological

Grammatical category/meaning:

set of syntactic features that:

- express meanings from the same conceptual domain
- occur in contrast to each other
- are typically expressed in the same fashion

Kinds of grammatical categories

- Aspect
- Case
- Definiteness
- Mood and Modality
- Noun Class
- Number
- Polarity
- Tense
- Transitivity
- Voice

Identify the grammatical categories expressed in

I have eaten two eggs

Morpheme:

- Smallest meaningful unit in the **grammar** of a language → it does not express lexical meaning, but grammatical meaning

Examples

Boys

- *boy-* (lexeme = young male human being)
- *-s* (morpheme = more than one, plural)

He stopped

- *stop-* (lexeme = cease movement)
- *-(p)ed* (morpheme = past tense)

Morph:

- Term sometimes used to refer to the phonological (the physical audible) realisation of a morpheme

climbed, stopped

English past tense morpheme is *-ed*

It has 2 different morphs as this is phonologically realised (pronounced) as [t] in *stopped* and as [d] in *climbed*

Allomorph:

- Each of the realisations of a morpheme
- They are complementary (the presence of one excludes the other)

Warning

Not all morphemes are easily identifiable

+

correspondence between morpheme and
pronunciation not always found



difficult for machine analysis and training

Let's remember

The typological classification is based on word structure



how all these lexical and grammatical items are linked to convey meanings

Back to the Typological Classification