

Morphology I

Ling 301 (Spring 2021)

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What we'll cover tonight

1. What is morphology?
2. What are words?
3. What's in a word?
4. What kinds of words are there?
5. Quick review

What is morphology?

- The study of words and word-parts.
- These word-parts are called morphemes.
- A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in a language.
- Each word contains at least one morpheme.



cat has one morpheme

cats has two morphemes:
cat and the plural -s

What is morphology?

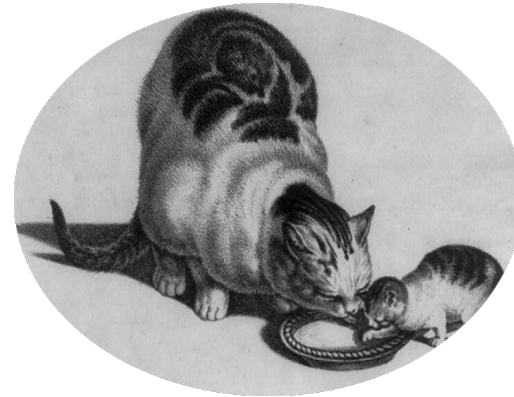
Sing has one morpheme



singer has two morphemes:
sing and the “one who does something” -*er*



moth has one morpheme



How many morphemes does
mother have?

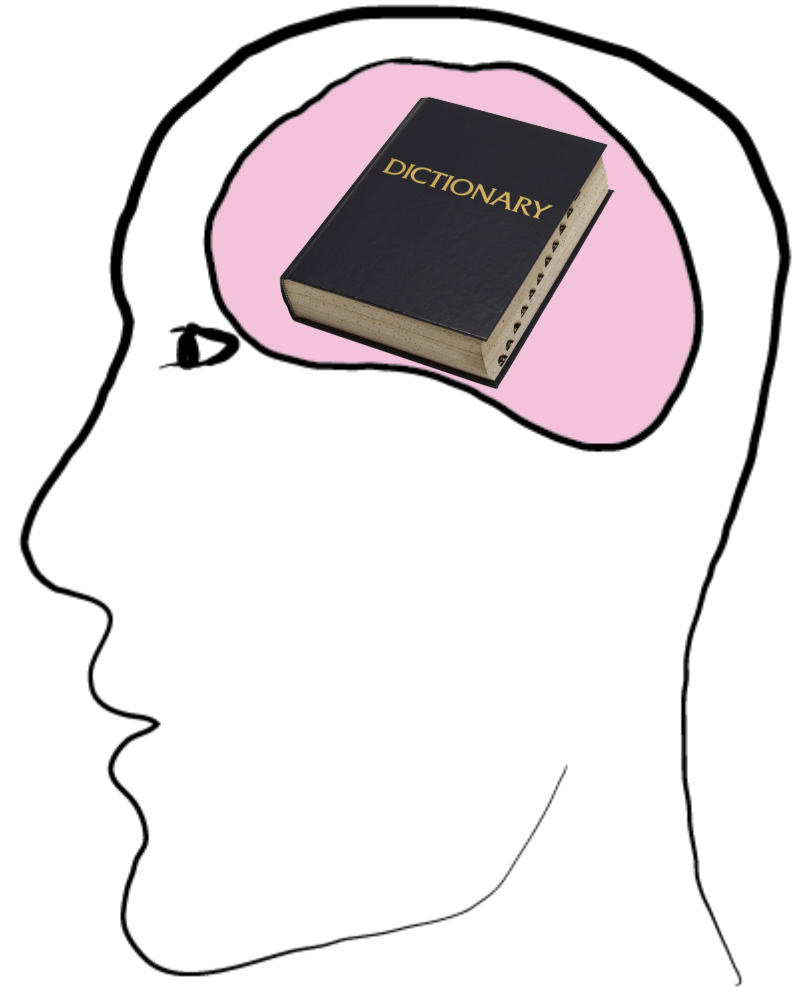
One, even though it ends in *er* –
it’s not “one who moths”

The Lexicon

- What is the *lexicon*?

[...] a sort of mental dictionary that language users—both speakers and hearers—have internalized as part and parcel of acquiring their particular language.

- What is stored in the lexicon?
- Words!
- Or, more specifically, *lexical entries*.



What's in a word?

- Words are stored in the lexicon – your mental dictionary.
- Words have **form**, **meaning**, and a **lexical category**.
- **Form**: pronunciation, spelling, gesture.
- **Meaning**: definition.
- **Lexical category**: part of speech (noun, verb, etc.)



Form:

moth /mɑθ/ or /mɒθ/

Meaning:

nocturnal flying insect with powdery wings.

Lexical category:

Noun



Lexical Entry

- Form:
/kæt/
- Meaning:
Small quadrupedal mammal
with whiskers and pointy
ears that meows and purrs.
- Lexical category:
Noun



Lexical Entry

- Form:
/dag/ or /dɒg/
- Meaning:
Small to medium mammal
that barks and growls.
- Lexical category:
Noun

What's in a word?

- As said before, each word has at least one morpheme.
- Depending on a word's **lexical category**, certain morphemes can be added to it.
- For example, many verbs can take *-er* “one who does something.”
sing-er, wash-er, drink-er, work-er, bake-(e)r
- Other lexical categories cannot take this suffix.
- Making a new word by adding morphemes to an existing word is called **derivation**. We'll talk more about word-formation next week.
- In addition to filling in a word's lexical entry, we should be able to identify the morphemes it's made up of.



Form: farmer /fɑːmər/

Meaning: one who farms

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

two: farm 'to sow & harvest crops'
+ -er 'one who does the verb'



Form: bicycle /baɪsɪkl̩/

Meaning: two-wheeled vehicle you pedal

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: two: bi 'two' + cycle 'wheel'

What's in a word?

- **Affixes** are morphemes that get added to a root or word. (You probably know prefix and suffix – two types of affixes.)
- Most affixes are **derivational**. They alter the meaning and lexical category of a word, thus creating a new word.
farm is a verb meaning 'to sow & harvest crops' + -er = *farmer*, a noun meaning 'one who sows & harvests crops'
- Some are **inflectional**. They don't create a new word, but change grammatical information about a word.
cat is a noun meaning 'small housepet' + -s = *cats*, the same noun but plural instead of singular

This means that *cats* is part of the same lexical entry as *cat*!

What's in a word?

- Morphemes can be **free** or **bound**.
- Free morphemes may appear on their own, as their own words.
- Bound morphemes must appear in connection with another morpheme.



farm
free or bound?
free!
-er
free or bound?
bound!



bi-
free or bound?
bound!
-cycle
free or bound?
free!

What kinds of words are there?

Every word belongs to a **lexical category**.

- Nouns ‘apple’ ‘aardvark’ ‘liberty’
- Verbs ‘run’ ‘play’ ‘consider’
- Adjectives ‘blue’ ‘octagonal’ ‘unbelievable’
- Adverbs ‘quickly’ ‘fast’ ‘yesterday’
- Prepositions ‘for’ ‘under’ ‘from’
- Determiners ‘the’ ‘a’ ‘his’
- Pronouns ‘she’ ‘him’ ‘it’
- Conjunctions ‘and’ ‘but’ ‘because’

What kinds of words are there?

Every word belongs to a **lexical category**.

- Nouns
- Verbs
- Adjectives

We'll mostly be dealing
with these three for now.

- Adverbs
- Prepositions
- Determiners
- Pronouns
- Conjunctions

'quickly' 'fast' 'yesterday'

'for' 'under' 'from'

'the' 'a' 'his'

'she' 'him' 'it'

'and' 'but' 'because'

What kinds of words are there?

- Some words are monomorphemic. They contain a single morpheme.
- Some words are polymorphemic. They have two or more morphemes. Of these words, some have **free** roots.

un- + **speak** + -able

‘unable to be spoken’

farm + -er

‘one who farms’

- Some have **bound** roots. A bound root cannot appear as its own word.

psych + -ology

‘study of the mind’

mono- + **graph**

‘book on a single subject’



Form: anteater /æntitɪ/

Meaning: animal that eats ants

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

three: *ant* + *eat* + *-er* 'one who does the verb'



Form: raccoon /ɹækʊn/

Meaning: nocturnal mammal with a mask

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: one: *raccoon*



Form: musicians /mjuzɪʃɪnz/

Meaning: people who play music

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes:

three: *music* + *-ian* 'one who does something'
+ *-s* 'plural'



Form: drummer /ˈdʒʌmɪ/

Meaning: one who plays a drum or drums

Lexical category: noun

Morphemes: two: *drum* + *-er* 'one who does the verb'



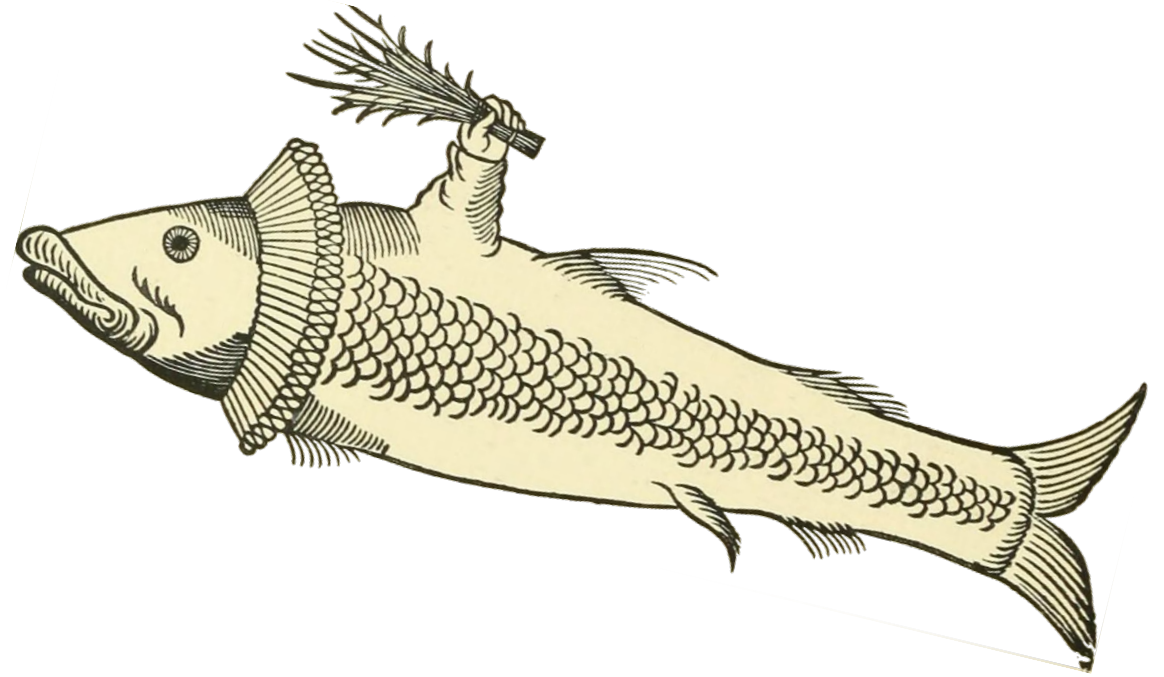
Form: athletic /æθlətɪk/

Meaning: skilled, like an athlete

Lexical category: adjective

Morphemes:

two: *athlete* + *-ic* 'like the noun'



Form: unbelievable /ʌnbəlivəbl̩/

Meaning: impossible to take seriously

Lexical category: adjective

Morphemes:

three: *un-* 'not' + *believe* + *-able* 'able to be verbed'

Quick review

- All words are made up of morphemes.
- Morphemes are the smallest meaningful unit in a language.
- Each word has at least one morpheme.
- Each morpheme is either free or bound.
- Each word has form, meaning, and a lexical category.
- You should be able to identify a word's **form**, **meaning**, and **lexical category**, as well as how many morphemes it has.