Unit 4-Content

Morphology

Module 1

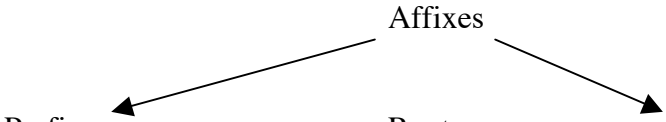
Root Words and Affixes
Let's take another look at one of the longest words in the English dictionary:

antidisestablishmentarianism

The dictionary divides the word this way:

anti + dis + establish + ment +ari + an + ism

These different word parts are called morphemes. Note that the only part of this word that can stand alone is **establish**. For this reason, it is called the central, or free morpheme. The other parts are called affixes, or parts that are added on to the root. Affixes are either "prefixes" or "suffixes."



Anti + dis + _____ + ment + ari + an + ism

Affixes are called "bound" morphemes because they can not stand alone –they have to be attached to another part of a word.

So, let's put this idea into practice. Think of some new words you can make by adding affixes onto the word: **desire**.

Here are some words you could have created:

Desirable
Undesirable
Desires
Desired
Desiring

While not all morphemes can stand on their own, they all have meaning. In the following example, *un*, *happy*, and *ly* are each separate morphemes that carry meaning.

un-happy un = (not)
happi-**ly** (in a ___ way)
One important idea to remember is that morphemes are not synonymous with syllables. Morphemes are lexical units while syllables (in English) are phonological units. And though sometimes they are interchangeable in monosyllabic words (put, go, take, etc) oftentimes, one single morpheme may be polysyllabic (de-sire, agree, respect)

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Creating New Words

Every language has its own process for forming new words. These processes are responsible for the updating of their lexicon. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, for American English and The Oxford English Dictionary, for British English, are updated yearly through re-editing or re-printing to reflect new words that have been incorporated. Although WFP or word forming processes vary, they are present in all languages. Analytical languages such as English (which has a tendency toward isolation) usually re-use an existing word with a new meaning (e.g. ***tivo*** (n), to ***tivo*** (v) or combine root words with other free morphemes (e.g. upgrade, input or fuse to words into one (e.g. brunch, motel). In French, Spanish and other Romance languages, the tendency is to create new words through affixation or derivation.

The most common types of new words are:

1. Derivatives – made up of one free morpheme and one or more bound morphemes.

E.g., *desi**rable*** ***un**desi**rable*** ***dis**agree* ***il**legal* *stress**ful***

2. Compound words – are formed by the combination of two or more free morphemes, and can be joined, separated, or hyphenated.

E.g., homework breakfast color blind half sister in-law high-level

3. Compound derivatives –are composed of a compound word to which one or more bound morphemes have been attached.

E.g., color blindness evil-doer homecoming

4. Shortened words –have been clipped and have lost one part, initial clipping, medial, or final clipping. Many new examples of shortening exist today with the influences of text messaging or IM's.

E.g. PEOPLE = **PPL** BECAUSE = **BCZ** BY THE WAY = **BTW** AND/ALL MY LOVE = **AML** LAUGH(S/ING) OUT LOUD = **LOL** PLEASE WRITE BACK = **PWB**
IN MY OPINION = **IMO** SEE YOU LATER = **CUL8R** STRAIGHT= **STR8**
WELL DONE= **WD** THANK YOU = **TY** THANKS = **THX** PLEASE = **PLZ**
etc.

*This new type of shortening is very different from the traditional shortening like: **till** (until) - **doc** (doctor) - vet (veterinarian) - **lab** (laboratory), etc. While they look more like acronyms, they do not come from the initials of a phrase but rather, are more abbreviations of a single word.

5. Acronyms – are formed by the initials of a phrase put together in a way that is phonetically comfortable to utter and sounds like a single word.

E.g. **LASER** - Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.
NASA - National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NATO - North Atlantic Treaty Organization
SWAT - Special Weapons And Tactics

Sometimes the acronym is polysemantic; i.e. it conveys more than one meaning, and only through content, can we understand what it stands for.

E.g. **DNA** - Deoxyribonucleic acid, Democratic National Party, Did Not Answer, Daily News and Announcements.

6. **Blends** –are the product of the fusion of two or more words where parts of the original words have been "sacrificed" or lost by clipping in order to achieve a comfortable uttered final product.

E.g., **brunch** (breakfast+ lunch) **motel** (motorist+ hotel) **Ebonics** (ebony + phonics) **meld** (melt + weld) **smog** (smoke + fog). We hear this type of new word blend often in popular culture to refer to couples like **Brangelina** (Brat Pit + Angelina Jolie) and new dog breeds like **goldendoodles** (golden retriever and poodle mix).

Common ELL Errors
One common example of interference between ELLs' first language and English occurs when they attempt to form English words through the process of derivation that is commonly used in their L1 rather than compounding that is common to new word formation in English. This results in the erred formation of words such as "computation" when the student really means "computer science".

Module2

Common Prefixes and Suffixes
By far the most important aspect of English morphology for our ELLs is the use of prefixes ad suffixes. Here are some examples:

Prefixes	**Meaning**	**Example:**
pre	before	predict
anti	against	antibacterial
un	not	uncommon
bi	two, twice	bilingual
inter	between, among	intermediary

Suffixes	**Meaning**	**Example**
-able	capable of	adaptable
-er, -or	the one who . . .	teacher
-ful	full of	useful
-ize	to make like	trivialize
-ism	action or practice	communism

Notice how these suffixes or morphemes above change the part of speech of the word they are attached to. For example, ***adapt*** is a verb, but ***adaptable*** is an adjective.

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The type of affixation we have seen so far in all our examples is the type that turns one word class (noun, verb, adjective, etc.) into another e.g. happy (adj) → happiness (noun) or changes the meaning while keeping the same word class e.g. happy (adj) → unhappy (adj) We call this type of process lexical affixation, or derivation, but there is another type of affixation very familiar to language English language teachers, inflexion which is the conjugating of words to express grammatical meaning such as –ed, -ing, -s (plural and 3rd person singular) - er (comparative) and – est (superlative). Inflexion does not change the word class or the lexical meaning of the original root. It only affects its grammar. We use inflectional morphemes almost every time we speak:

Verb + s	plays
Verb + ed	played
Verb + ing	playing

If you have experience with another language like French, Italian, Portuguese, or Spanish, you'll appreciate the fact that the verb in English is relatively simple. For example, in Spanish there are approximately 87 forms for each verb! Of course, that includes all the auxiliaries like the Spanish equivalents of have and had. Still, English verbs are less complex, by far. English has only one inflexion mark (-s) for the 3rd person singular of verbs in the present while Spanish has six. Spanish has up to 12 different past tense forms for verbs, while English has only one (-ed). However, the simplicity of the morphemes in English is overshadowed by the complexity of the pronunciation of those two morphemes –s and –ed, since each of them has three voiced and voiceless variants. We'll discuss this more later on.

Nouns

In English, we can make nouns into plurals and possessives simply by adding an s.

One book	two books
	The book's cover
	John's book

Adjectives and Adverbs

Common suffixes that are used for adjectives and adverbs:

-er > for comparatives

clear + er	= clearer
fast + er	= faster

-est> for superlatives

clear + est	= clearest
fast + est	= fastest

-ly> adverbs

clear + ly	= clearly

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Comparing Inflectional Systems

Read the following excerpt from the article, "Morphology," by Dr. Elizabeth Platt of Florida State University to better understand how our ELLs acquire the inflection system in English.

Morphology

By Dr. Elizabeth Platt, Florida State University

Acquisition of an Inflectional System

In order to understand the importance of the acquisition of an inflectional morphological system we need to compare several languages, some of which are spoken by our students. We have already seen that English has a rather simple way of marking nouns, with either a plural or singular form. However, Spanish, Italian, and other Romance languages also gender-mark nouns. For example, in Spanish, table is ***mesa***, a feminine form, and book is ***libro***, a masculine form. Articles preceding, and adjectives following these nouns must also agree in gender and number with the nouns, as in the following examples:

El libro rojo est`a en la mesa peque˜a. **(The book red is on the table small)**

Los libros rojos estan en las mesas pequenas. **(The books red are on the tables small)**

Other kinds of noun marking also occur in languages. Many indigenous languages spoken in North and South America use classifier systems according to their shape. Shapes often marked in classifier languages include "round" and "long, cylindrical." A word like sun would thus include two parts –the classifier and the name of the thing itself. Vietnamese and Chinese also have classifier systems, though the systems include semantic information as well as information about shapes. Other languages, such as the Bantu languages in Eastern and Southern Africa, have concordance systems. For example, Swahili has eight noun classes, most having singular and plural forms. These are basically semantic classes, such as the "*m-*" "*wa-*" class that includes most of the names of animals and humans. When a language has a noun concordance system, adjectives, possessives, locatives, and verbs all carry the concordance markers of the head noun, as in the following sentence whose subject is a "*m-*" "*wa-*" class noun.

Watu wale wawili walikwenda sokonil

People those two 3ps-past-go market-to

Finally, many European languages, especially those spoken by Slavic people, have case marking on nouns. English carries a remnant of case marking in its pronoun system: *he* when used as sentence subject, *him* as object, *his* as possessive, and *himself* as reflective. Other languages also mark nouns in this way, and may also mark more than just these three cases. English has a relatively simple system of marking nouns.

If we were to study verbs and other lexical categories, we would find similar complexity in systems different from English. Therefore, for native English speakers of those languages, the English system of plural marking should be easy (especially for speakers of languages in the South Pacific that have forms of showing a three-way distinction: singular, two only, and more than two).

However, some languages spoken in Southeast Asia, of which Vietnamese is the best example, have no affixation whatsoever on any word. Thus, plurality can only be shown by specifying number, or using a word like many. When Vietnamese speakers begin learning English, they usually omit the plural endings, as well as the verb tenses (there are also phonological reasons for these omissions). Therefore, acquisition of the English plural form is often problematic for the speakers of Asian languages; the "-s" may not occur regularly, even in the speech of well-advanced learners.

We cannot leave this section with a misperception about the nature of the English inflectional morphology system. Because it lacks the large number of forms that other languages have, one might think it is easy to learn. But it is with these very simple morphological forms that non-native speakers experience the most difficulty. Some researchers (Slobin, 1979 and Jaeggli and Hyams, 1986) have suggested that morphologically complex, but regular, systems are easier for small children to learn than reduced, irregular ones.

Systems in which the same morpheme is used for more than one purpose are also difficult for learners. For example, *do* is both a semantically empty function word (auxiliary) and a verb in its own right. Children learning Turkish or Spanish as their first language may spend less time acquiring their very elaborate, but consistent, system of verb affixes than do children learning English who must learn the "do" support system mentioned earlier. This is apparently also the case for second language learners.

Module 3

Pronunciation of Inflectional Morphemes and Suffixes

Now, let's take a look at some pronunciation rules of 2 common "inflectional" morphemes and suffixes:

1) **-s** that marks the 3rd person singular of the verb: play**s**

2) **-ed** that marks the past tense: play**ed**

-s

Note the different pronunciations of the **–s**:

play/**z**/ act/**s**/ watch/**Iz**/

These pronunciations are determined by the sounds that come before the –s ending. We say that the pronunciations are rule-governed. This same rule also applies to the way we pronounce the plurals of regular nouns. Note, the verb examples we chose are also nouns:

plays /**z**/ act /s/ watch /**Iz**/

The pronunciation is the same for the possessive –s:

John's = /**z**/ Mark's = /**s**/ Rose's = /**Iz**/

The rule that determines the different pronunciations of –s is as follows:
After these sounds that occur at the end of the following roots, the suffix is pronounced as /Iz/:

proc**ess** (vowel + ss)
r**ose** (vowel + s + e)
d**ish** (vowel + sh)
gar**age** (vowel + ge)
chur**ch** (ch)
j**udge** (vowel + dge)

After all other voiced sounds that occur at the end of the roots, the suffix –s is pronounced /z/. For example:

/g/ dog
/n/ John or run

After all other voiceless sounds that occur at the end of the roots, the suffix –s is pronounced /s/. For example:

/t/ as in cat
/k/ as in Mark

-ed

The pronunciation of the –ed, that marks the regular past tense English, is pronounced in three different ways:

play/d/ want/Id/ walk/t/

The rule that governs which of these final sounds to make is as follows:

1. After the sounds /t/ and /d/ as in "want" and "kid," the –ed form is pronounced /Id/ -wanted, kidded.
2. After all other voiced sounds, like /e/ in "play," the –ed form is pronounced /d/ -played.
3. After all other voiceless sounds, like /k/ in "walk," the –ed form is pronounced /t/