

## TEACHING MORPHEMES, FREE AND BOUND FORMS

Mahkbuba Kiyomova

Scientific adviser.

Nigina Mustafayeva

Student.

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**Abstract.** A morpheme is also an association of a given meaning with a given sound pattern. But unlike a word it is not autonomous. Morphemes occur in speech only as constituent parts of words, not independently, although a word may consist of a single morpheme. Nor are they divisible into smaller meaningful units. That is why the morpheme may be defined as the minimum meaningful language unit.

**Key words:** morpheme, constructing words, roots, affixes.

## ОБУЧЕНИЕ МОРФЕМАМ, СВОБОДНЫМ И СВЯЗАННЫМ ФОРМАМ

**Аннотация.** Морфема – это также ассоциация данного значения с данным звуковым образцом. Но в отличие от слова оно не автономно. Морфемы встречаются в речи только как составные части слов, а не самостоятельно, хотя слово может состоять из одной морфемы. Они также не делятся на более мелкие значимые единицы. Именно поэтому морфему можно определить как минимальную значимую единицу языка.

**Ключевые слова:** морфема, конструкции слов, корни, аффиксы.

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If we describe a word as an autonomous unit of language in which a particular meaning is associated with a particular sound complex and which is capable of a particular grammatical employment and able to form a sentence by itself we have the possibility to distinguish it from the other fundamental language unit, namely, the morpheme.

The term morpheme is derived from Gr morphe 'form'+ eme. Linguists to denote the smallest unit or the minimum distinctive feature have adopted the Greek suffix – eme. (Cf. phoneme, sememe). The morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of form. A form in these cases is a recurring discrete unit of speech.

A form is said to be free if it may stand alone without changing its meaning; if not, it is a bound form, so called because it is always bound to something else. For example, if we compare the words sportive and elegant and their parts, we see that sport, sportive, elegant may occur alone as utterances, whereas eleg – – ive, – ant are bound forms because they never occur alone. A word is, by L. Bloomfield's definition, a minimum free form. A morpheme is said to be either bound or

free. This statement' should be taken with caution. It means that some morphemes are capable of forming words without adding other morphemes: that is, they are homonymous to free forms.

According to the role they play in constructing words, morphemes are subdivided into roots and affixes. The latter are further subdivided, according to their position, into prefixes, suffixes and infixes, and according to their function and meaning, into derivational and functional affixes, the latter also called endings or outer formatives.

When a derivational or functional affix is stripped from the word, what remains is a stem (or a stem base). The stem expresses the lexical and the part of speech meaning.<sup>1</sup> For the word *hearty* and for the paradigm *heart (Sing.) – hearts (Pl.)*<sup>2</sup> the stem may be represented as *heart-*. This stem is a single morpheme, it contains nothing but the root, so it is a simple stem. It is also a free stem because it is homonymous to the word *heart*.

A stem may also be defined as the part of the word that remains unchanged throughout its paradigm. The stem of the paradigm *hearty – heartier – (the) heartiest* is *hearty-*. It is a free stem, but as it consists of a root morpheme and an affix, it is not simple but derived. Thus, a stem containing one or more affixes is a derived stem. If after deducing the affix the remaining stem is not homonymous to a separate word of the same root, we call it a bound stem. Thus, in the word *cordial* 'proceeding as if from the heart', the adjective-forming suffix can be separated on the analogy with such words as *bronchia*/, *radial*, *social*. The remaining stem, however, cannot form a separate' word by itself: it is bound. In *cordially* and *cordiality*, on the other hand, the stems are free.

Bound stems are especially characteristic of loan words. The point may be illustrated by the following French borrowings: *arrogance*, *charity*, *courage*, *coward*, *distort*, *involve*, *notion*, *legible* and *tolerable*, to give but a few.<sup>3</sup> After the suffixes of these words are taken away the remaining elements are: *arrog-*, *char-*, *cour-*, *cow-*, – *tort*, – *voIve*, *nat-*, *leg-*, *toler-*, which do not coincide with any semantically related independent words.

Roots-are main morphemic vehicles of a given idea in a given language at a given stage of its development. A root may be also regarded as the ultimate constituent element which remains after the removal of all functional and derivational affixes and does not admit any further analysis. It is the common element of words within a word-family. Thus, – *heart* – is the common root of

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<sup>1</sup> See also: П. А. Соболева, об основах слов, связанных отношениями конверсии. Сб. «Иностранные языки в высшей школе», вып. 2, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> A paradigm is defined as the system of grammatical forms characteristic of a word.

<sup>3</sup> Historical lexicology shows how sometimes the stem becomes bound due to the internal changes in the stem that accompany the addition of affixes; cf. *broad*: *breadth*, *clean*: *cleanly* ['klenhj], *dear*: *dearth* [dɛ:θ], *grief*: *-grievous*.

the following series of words: heart, hearten, dishearten, heartily, heartless, hearty, heartiness, sweetheart, heart-broken, kind-hearted, whole-heartedly, etc. In some of these, as, for example, in hearten, there is only one root; in others the root – heart is combined with some other root, thus forming a compound like sweetheart.

It will at once be noticed that the root in English is very often homonymous with the word. This fact is of fundamental importance as it is one of the most specific features of the English language arising from its general grammatical system on the one hand, and from its phonemic system on the other. The influence of the analytical structure of the language is obvious. The second point, however, calls for some explanation. Actually the usual phonemic shape most favoured in English is one single stressed syllable: bear, find, jump, land, man, sing, etc. This does not give much space for a second morpheme to add classifying Lexico-grammatical meaning to the lexical meaning already present in the root-stem, so the Lexico-grammatical meaning must be signaled by distribution. In the phrases a morning's drive, a morning's ride, a morning's walk the words drive, ride and walk receive the Lexico-grammatical meaning of a noun not due to the structure of their stems, but because they are preceded by a noun in the Possessive case.

An English word does not necessarily contain formatives indicating to what part of speech it belongs. This holds true even with respect to inflexible parts of speech, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives. Not all roots are free forms, but productive roots, i.e. roots capable of producing new words, usually are. The semantic realization of an English word is therefore very specific. Its dependence on distribution is further enhanced by the widespread occurrence of homonymy both among root morphemes and affixes. Note how many words in the following statement might be ambiguous if taken in isolation: A change of work is as good as a rest.

The above treatment of the root is purely synchronic, as we have taken into consideration only the facts of present-day English. But the same problem of the morpheme serving as the main signal of a given lexical meaning is studied in etymology, i.e. in that branch of linguistics which deals with the origin and development of words tracing them back to their earliest determinable source. When approached thus historically or diachronically the word heart will be classified as Common Germanic. One will look for cognates, i.e. words descended from a common ancestor. The cognates of heart are the Latin *cor*, whence cordial 'hearty', 'sincere', and so cordially and cordiality; also the Greek *kardia*, whence English cardiac condition. The cognates outside the English vocabulary are the Russian *сердце*, the German *Herz*, the Spanish *corazon* and some other words.

To emphasize the difference between the synchronic and the diachronic treatment, we shall call the common element of cognate words in different languages not their root but their radical element. An interesting example of historical treatment may be found in Potter's book.<sup>1</sup> Potter shows that the same radical element s-d is to be recognized in the English monosyllables sit, seat, soot and nest. The radical element is s-d, the vowels may be different. Potter distinguishes five grades: (1) – sed – as in Latin sedere, whence the English sedentary 'requiring much sitting', 'physically inactive' (sedentary work, sedentary person) and sediment 'the part that settles to the bottom of a liquid'. From sedare, sedat (the causative of sedere) the English vocabulary has sedate 'quiet', 'calm' and its derivatives: sedately, sedateness, sedative; supersede is 'to sit above', hence 'to replace'. This meaning developed, as Potter explains, at the time when seats at schools were assigned by quality of work, so if a pupil surpassed another he superseded him. The verb sit belongs to this group also, being developed from Common Germanic setjan. (2) The variant – – sod – is represented by the Past Tense sat, (3) [-se:d] – is observed in Mode seat<old Norse sæti>; Common Germanic sät. (4) [-so:d-l] as in English soot with its Northern pronunciation [su:t]<OE and ON sot 'that which sits or settles in the chimney'. (5) From the vanishing grade E-sad-l combined with the adverb ni-'down' which is cognate with the German nieder, the Indo-European noun ni-sd-os 'place where the bird sits down' is formed, whence both the English nest and the Russian гнездо. The Latin cognate is nidus, which is used in English as a scientific term 'place in which insects deposit eggs'; nidification means 'nest building'.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Potter, Modern Linguistics, p. 81, London, 1957

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