Al Muthanna University
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An Introductory English Grammar

Chapter Eight

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية
المرحلة الثانية / الدراسة المسائية
المـادة: النحو
محاضرات مادة النحو   المحاضرة رقم (1)

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Morphology

Important Definitions

Morphology is the scientific study of the internal structure of words.

The morpheme is a short segment of language that meets three criteria:

1. The morpheme is a word or a part of a word that has meaning.

2. The morpheme cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts.

3. The morpheme occurs in different environments with a relatively stable meaning.

Examples:

1. (read) meets the three criteria of the morpheme: (1) It is a word that has meaning. (2) It cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts. (3) It occurs in different environments with a relatively stable meaning: (reader), (reading), (readings).

2. (write) meets the three criteria of the morpheme: (1) It is a word that has meaning. (It cannot be divided into smaller parts. (3) It occurs in different environments with a relatively stable meaning: (writer), (writing), (writings).

3. (straight) meets the three criteria of the morpheme: (1) It is a word that has meaning. (2) It cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts. (3) It occurs in different environments with a relatively stable meaning: (straighten), (straightedge).

4. (- en), in the word (brighten), meets the three criteria of the morpheme: (1) It is a part of a word that has meaning. (- en) means (make). (2) It cannot be divided into smaller meaningful parts. (3) It occurs in different environments with a relatively stable meaning: (brighten) ► (- en) means 'make', (cheapen) ► (- en) means 'make', (darken) ► (- en) means 'make', (deepen) ► (- en) means 'make', (soften) ► (- en) means 'make'.

Exercise (1):

After each word write a number showing how many morphemes it contains.

Word	Morphemes	Word	Morphemes
play	1	able	1
reply	2	unable	2
date	1	miniskirt	2
antedate	2	rain	1
hygiene	1	rainy	2
weak	1	cheap	1
weaken	2	cheaply	2
man	1	cheaper	2
manly	2	cover	1
keep	1	see	1
keeper	2	reader	2

Exercise (2): Write the meaning of the underlined morphemes.

antedate	before
reply	again
manly	like
keeper	a person who does something
unable	not
rainy	having the quality of the thing mentioned: cloudy, rainy, thirsty

cheapest	most
inactive	not
impossible	not
malfunction	bad

The Morpheme:

It is the basic unit of the grammatical structure. It refers to the minimal unit of meaning or grammatical function (i.e. the smallest meaningful unit of a language), e.g., the word 'reopened', in the sentence 'The police reopened the investigation', consists of three morphemes: (re- , open, ed): one minimal unit of meaning is (open), another minimal unit of meaning (re-), and a minimal unit of grammatical function (-ed) indicating past tense.

Morphemes are classified into two distinct types:

1. Free Morphemes

Free Morpheme is the morpheme that can be occurred alone with meaning, e.g. (see), (read), (straight), (yes), (no), (eat), (speak), (real), (open), (tour). Free morphemes are the morphemes that have distinct meanings.

2. Bound Morphemes

Bound morpheme is the morpheme that cannot be occurred alone with meaning. It must be attached to one or more morphemes to form a word, e.g. (ante -), (re -), (- ly), (- er), (un -)

Examples:

(preview) = (pre -)   a bound morpheme

        (view) a free morpheme

(played) = (play) a free morpheme

        (- ed) a bound morpheme

(writer) = (write) a free morpheme

        (- er) a bound morpheme

(speaker) = (speak) a free morpheme

        (- er)   a bound morpheme

(cheaply) = (cheap)   a free morpheme

        (- ly) a bound morpheme

(weaken)   = (weak) a free morpheme

        (- en) a bound morpheme

(inactive) = (in -) a bound morpheme

        (active) a free morpheme

In fact, bound morphemes cannot stand alone with a distinct meaning, but they attached to another form, e.g. (re-), (- ist), (- ed), (- s)

(bound morphemes are mainly affixes)

Generally speaking, free morphemes can be considered as the set of separate English word forms.

Base Morphemes and Affix Morphemes

Morphemes are also classified into:

1. Base Morphemes

2. Affix Morphemes

Base Morphemes

Base Morpheme is a part of a word that has the principal meaning, e.g.,

(re-enter) = (enter) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (re-enter).

(womanly) = (woman) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (womanly).

(lighten) = (light) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (lighten).

(failure) = (fail) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (failure).

(infamous) = (famous) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (famous).

(friendships) = (friend) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (friendships).

(friendship) = (friend) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (friendship).

(unlikely) = (like) is the base morpheme that has the principal meaning in (unlikely).

(enlighten) = (light) is the basic morpheme that has the basic meaning in (enlighten).

(subway) = (way) is the basic morpheme that has the principal meaning in (subway).

(famous) = (fame) is the basic morpheme that has the principal meaning in (famous).

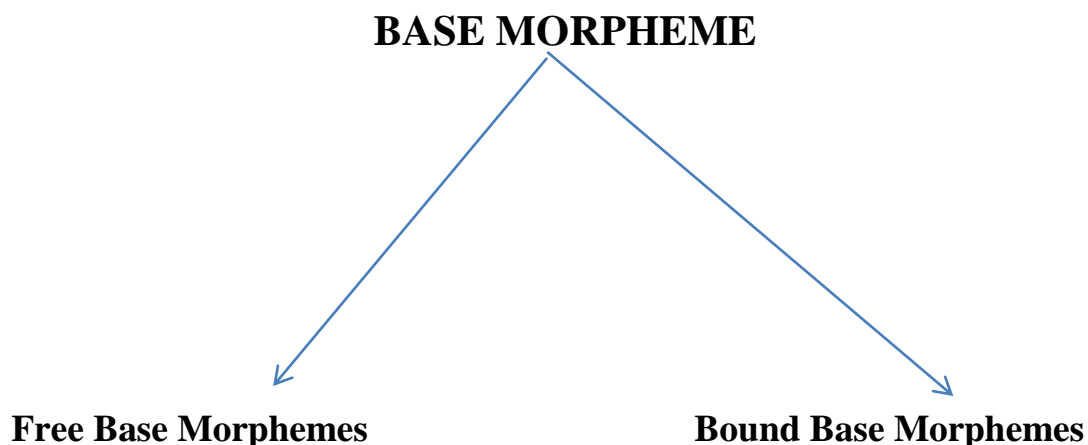(prewar) = (war) is the basic morpheme that has the principal meaning in (prewar).

Important Points:

1. A word may contain one base morpheme and several affixes.

2. Most of base morphemes in English are free morphemes.

Base Morphemes are classified into two types:

1. Free Base Morphemes.

2. Bound Base Morphemes.

Study the following diagram

<div align="center">

BASE MORPHEME

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Free Base Morphemes   **Bound Base Morphemes**

1. Free Base Morpheme: It is a part of a word that has the principal meaning.

Examples:

(unhappy) = (happy) is the free base morpheme that has the principal meaning in the word (unhappy).

(befriend) = (friend) is the free base morpheme that has the principal meaning in the word (befriend).

(cheerful) = (cheer) is the free base morpheme that has the principal meaning in the word (cheerful).

2. Bound Base Morpheme: It is a part of a word that cannot stand alone as a separate word with meaning.

Examples:
(receive) = (- ceive) is the bound base morpheme that cannot stand alone separate as a word with meaning.
(repeat) = (- peat) is the bound base morpheme that cannot stand alone separate as a word with meaning.
In fact, many bound base morphemes in English come from Latin and Greek.