

Morphology

Morphology (Class Handout)

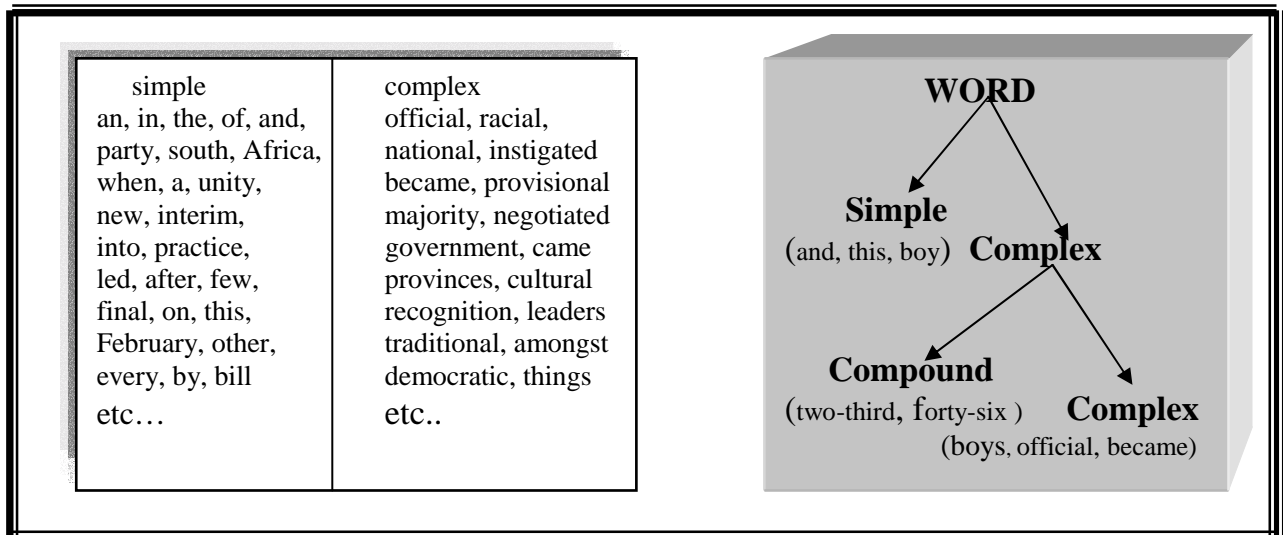
What could be the **morphology** of the word '*morphology*'? Well, if you rely on or believe in the *Latin source* or notion of *Latinate root* (i.e. a notion that will be explained to you later in the course), you could say that the morphology of "Morphology" is "*morph*"- 'form/shape' and "*ology*"- 'study' or 'branch of knowledge'. So, we can say that "Morphology" is the study of shape/form of words.

It is natural if one wonders, 'A word is a 'WORD'. What is so special about its shape or form?' The reaction is justified as we are not used to wonder at such small things. However, as a student/teacher/member of the discipline (i.e. Linguistics), we cannot simply be satisfied when we look at the following words and don't inquire about the nature of their structure or at least shape:

Words	letters	syllables
a	01	01
on	02	01
the	03	01
poor	04	01
clear	05	01
centre	06	02
central	07	02
centralize	10	03
centralization	14	05

The given details of these words are not directly related to the form or shape of the words that we study in Morphology; however, the details justify the motivation of the discipline 'Morphology'. If there are some accountable differences amongst these words, let it be of orthographic or syllabic, it is not wise to call them just WORDS, and more so, the same kinds or types of words.

We started the course with a simple division/distinction of WORDS in mainly two and then extended them into three categories. Let us start with the basic two categories we discussed in the class.



After the first step into the world of awareness, it was quite fascinating for us to realize that WORDS are not that simple as they look. We should start internalizing the ideas that there are WORDS and there are WORD-PARTS. Words like ‘*and*’, ‘*this*’ & ‘*boy*’ are called **simple words** because they are only WORDS i.e. they don’t contain any WORD-PART that can be taken out from them and still have them as meaningful words. The words ‘*office + al*’, ‘*boy + s*’ & ‘*become + past*’ not only contain WORD but also have WORD-PARTS which make these words **complex words**. This is so, because even if we take out these WORD-PARTS out of these words, they don’t lose the status of WORDS. (NOTE: Compound words will be explained in the course later).

It is an interesting as well as eye-opening fact to acknowledge that ‘boy’ is a **simple word**, however, if we add a WORD-PART ‘-s’ to the word ‘boy’, it becomes a **complex word**. So, there must be something important about this ‘-s’ in morphology. Does it have a meaning of its own? If you think carefully, you will agree to the fact that it does have a meaning. What is that meaning? Well, simple enough, it makes a singular word (i.e. a Noun) into a plural word. What else? Does it have some other meaning too? THINK about it. We will learn about it bit later in the course.

When we talk about the WORD-PART ‘-s’ and try to decide the nature and meaning of the word-part, we are not talking about the orthographic representation of ‘-s’ i.e. it is not ‘-es’ ‘eɪz’. We are talking about the pronunciation of the WORD-PART which is just ‘-s’ ‘s’ sound. It is necessary to make this distinction at this stage because our argumentation and analysis will heavily rely on this distinction.

We asked a question about the other possible meaning of the WORD-PART ‘-s’ in the earlier paragraph. Once again if you observe the words in the given TEXT or any text for that matter you will agree that we also find other uses of the WORD-PART ‘-s’ in English.

For example: He talks too much. She runs very fast. The boy brushes his teeth thrice a day.

Here is our earlier use of the WORD-PART ‘-s’, we have talked so much about:

For example: I bought two books yesterday. She has three dogs at home. We should be careful about the buses.

We have to make a careful distinction of these two types of WORD-PARTS in our examples. There is nothing very new to talk about these WORD-PARTS. We all have learned this much in our school grammar. In the first use of this word-part when it gets attached to a NOUN (Singular), it turns that NOUN into a plural counterpart while in the latter use of the WORD-PART where it occurs with a VERB, it requires the verb to be in simple present form and can only take a SUBJECT that is 3rdPerson Singular. For example:

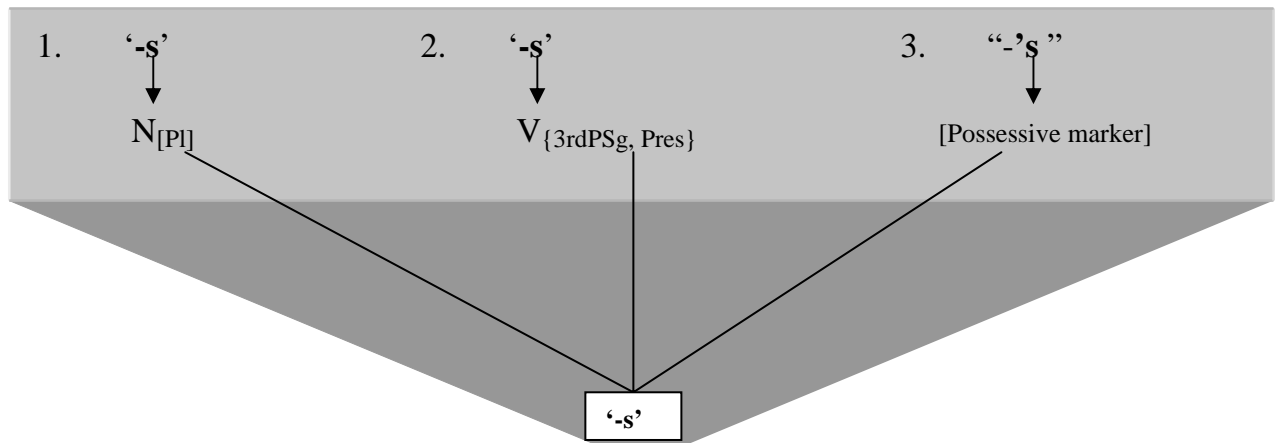
BOOK_(NSg) → BOOKS_(NPl)
DOG_(NSg) → DOGS_(NPl)
BUS_(NSg) → BUSES_(NPl)

He TALKS_{pres, 3rdPSg} a lot.
She RUNS_{pres, 3rdPSg} very fast.
The boy BRUSHES_{pres, 3rdPSg} his teeth thrice a day.

So, there are at least two different uses of the WORD-PART ‘-s’ in English, we talked about in the course. Nevertheless, there is another use of this WORD-PART in English that has somewhat a different orthographic representation. We are bringing this example in the discussion deliberately to remind you again that we pay much more attention to the pronunciation (sound) part of the WORDS in linguistics than the written form. The other use of the WORD-PART ‘-s’ in English is as the possessive marker written with an apostrophe e.g. “-’s”. Here is the example:

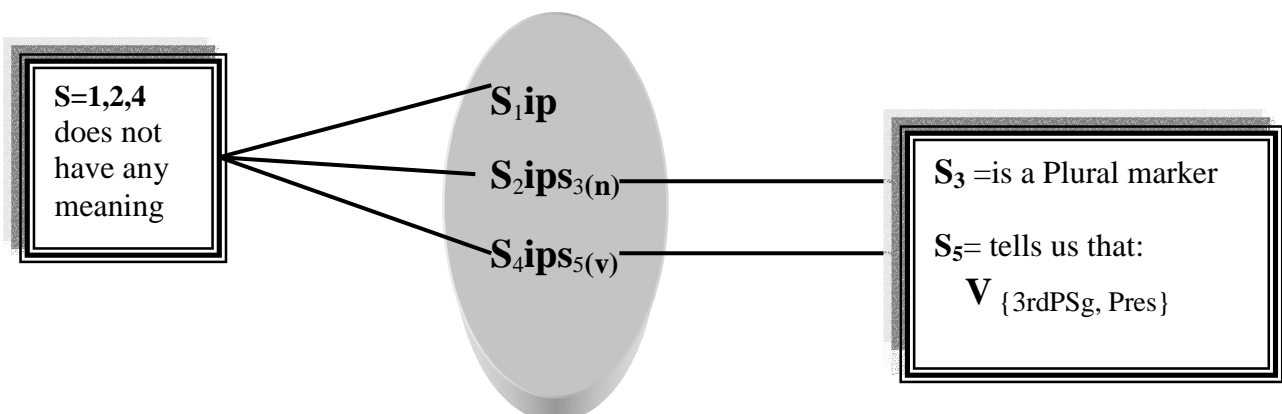
The book's cover...
 Bill's book...
 Rich's bike... (Rich is the short form of a proper name Richard)

What should we say about the three different uses of the WORD-PART '-s' in English? Well, there is a term used in Semantics (i.e. the branch of linguistics that studies the MEANING of words, phrases and sentences), called **HOMOPHONY**. The homophonous words are those words that have SAME FORM but different meaning. Same *FORM* here means the pronunciation part. Let us see our three WORD-PARTS in this context:



We think we have made it clear enough to you by now that there is a meaning of the WORD-PART '-s'. But does it also mean that this WORD-PART 'S' has its meaning anywhere it occurs? THINK about it.

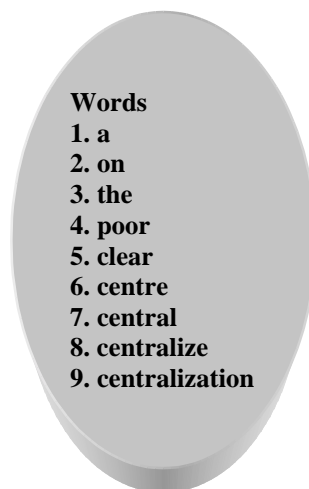
Look at the following words discussed in the class:



So, the point is that not every occurrence of [s] has its own meaning and the meaning of the WORD-PART '-s' is contextually bound. What is the common factor amongst its occurrences in most of the cases? It is very simple and predictable from the uses that the WORD-PART has its own meaning and when it gets attached to simple word, the word in result turns into a complex one.

We think, this adequately explains the nature of the WORD-PART '-s'. We should also make it clear at this stage that the nature of the WORD-PART, whether it is '-s', '-al' or '-ity', all of them need such attention and elaboration.

Let us bring back our initial discussion and see what we can now say about the WORDS we started the whole debate with!



Wouldn't it be foolish to ask how many words are there in the list (especially when we have numbered all of them)? What do you say? We should think about the question again and again. Had we been talking about the WORD in layman's term, we wouldn't have come here to study or teach 'Morphology'. So, in order to maintain the distinction amongst different kinds of WORDS, we have a term in 'morphology' called 'MORPHEME'. The definition of a 'morpheme' is as follows:

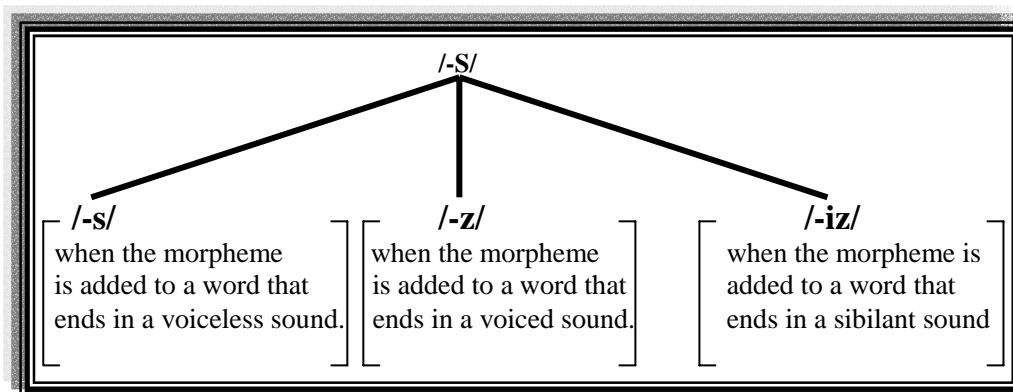
A morpheme is the smallest indivisible meaningful unit of language.

The term ‘morpheme’ is new but the function that the aforementioned definition assigns to it makes it somewhat familiar to what we have been calling WORD & WORD-PART up to now. So, if we ask a simple question as to what is the WORD and what is the WORD-PART in ‘Boys’ and ‘Books’, you will all agree that ‘boy’ and ‘book’ are WORDS while ‘-s’ in both cases is the WORD-PART. If we replace the TERM ‘word-part’ with ‘morpheme’ and ask how many ‘morphemes’ are there in the given two words, there should be no problem in saying that there are TWO morphemes in each words. Similarly, if we say there are 15 ‘morphemes’ in the list of 9 words, will you agree to it or not? If you say ‘yes’, justify your answer, and if you say ‘no’, explain why.

Let us now turn to the shape of the ‘morpheme’ ‘-s’ in the given examples:

NOUNS		VERBS		Possessive marker	
Written form	Pronunciation	Written form	Pronunciation	Written form	Pronunciation
books	/-s/	talks	/-s/	book’S cover	/-s/
dogs	/-z/	turns	/-z/	Bill’S book	/-z/
buses	/-iz/	brushes	/-iz/	Rich’S bike	/iz/

We can summarize the facts of the tables in the following ways:



We need to introduce another *term* here to describe such function of a ‘morpheme’. A morpheme which has different shapes/form but one meaning is called an ALLOMORPH. Examine the following words (verbs) and pay attention to the past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ and its different pronunciations depending on the environment in which the morpheme ‘-ed’ occurs:

Verb	Written form	pronunciation	Explanation:
paint	paint- ed	/-ɪd /	The past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ is pronounced as /-ɪd / if it occurs before a word that ends in either / t / or / d / sound.
mend	mend- ed	/-ɪd /	
turn	turn- ed	/-d /	The past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ is pronounced as /-d / if it occurs before a word that ends in a voiced sound except a sound /-d /.
force	force- d	/-d /	
park	park- ed	/-t /	The past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ is pronounced as /-t / if it occurs before a word that ends in a voiceless sound except a sound / t /.
pick	pick- ed	/-t /	

So, we can say that the past tense morpheme ‘-ed’ also a morpheme that has three different forms/shapes as given in the diagram above. These three different forms/shapes of the past tense morpheme are also called the allomorphs of the /-ed/. We can draw a diagram similar to the morpheme ‘-s’ as follows:

