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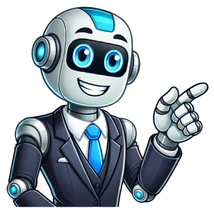

Inflectional morphemes represent a crucial aspect of word formation, especially when considering how words adapt to fit grammatical contexts. The function of inflectional morphemes is to change a word's form to indicate grammatical information. Grammatical information can include number, tense, and possession; these changes never alter the word's basic meaning or category. The English language uses inflectional morphemes to denote plurality such as adding "-s" to "dog" to form "dogs", marking tense by adding "-ed" to "walk" to create "walked", indicating possession by adding "'s" to "John" to make "John's", and comparative/superlative degrees through suffixes like "-er" and "-est", as in "faster" and "fastest." Ever stopped to think about how words are actually built? It's not just random letters thrown together! There's a whole science to it, a secret code that unlocks the way we understand and use language. Welcome to the fascinating world of morphology! So, what exactly is morphology? Well, in simple terms, it's the study of word structure. Think of it as taking words apart like Lego bricks to see what makes them tick. It's about understanding how words are formed and how those little pieces contribute to the overall meaning. Why should you care about morphology? Because it's like having a superpower for language! Understanding morphology is crucial for both understanding and producing language. It helps you decode unfamiliar words, grasp grammatical nuances, and even boost your vocabulary. Knowing how words are put together is the key to unlocking a deeper understanding of any language. In this blog post, we're going to dive into the essential concepts of morphology. We'll explore the building blocks of words, discover the magic of affixes, and uncover how morphology shapes the way languages work around the world. Get ready to have your mind blown by the hidden world within words! The Cornerstone: Morphemes Explained Okay, folks, buckle up! We're about to dive into the tiniest, but mightiest, building blocks of language: Morphemes. Think of them as the Legos of words. Each one carries a little piece of meaning, and when you snap them together, you get the incredible structures we call words. So, what exactly is a morpheme? Simply put, it's the smallest unit of language that has meaning. You can't break it down any further without losing that meaning. Now, not all morphemes are created equal. Some are independent and self-sufficient, like that cool loner kid in high school, while others need friends to feel complete. This leads us to the dynamic duo of morphemes: Free and Bound. Free Morphemes: The Independent Ones Free morphemes are those words that can stand all by themselves. They don't need any attachments or sidekicks. These are your everyday words like "cat," "run," "blue," and "happy." Each of these words is a single morpheme that carries its own meaning and can happily exist on its own in a sentence. Easy peasy, right? Bound Morphemes: The Social Butterflies On the other hand, bound morphemes are those bits that can't stand alone. They need to be attached to something else to make sense. Think of them as prefixes and suffixes. For example, "-ing" as in "running," "un-" as in "unhappy," or "-ed" as in "walked." These guys can't just wander around on their own; they need a free morpheme to latch onto and modify its meaning. Without that attachment, they're just sad, lonely fragments. Now, let's add another layer of fun with… Allomorphs: Morphemes in Disguise Just when you thought you had morphemes figured out, here come the allomorphs. An allomorph is simply a variant form of a morpheme. Think of it like this: Superman and Clark Kent are the same person, just in different outfits. A classic example is the plural morpheme in English. We usually add "-s" to make something plural, like "cats." But what about "dogs"? We still add an "-s" sound, but it's pronounced differently (/z/ instead of /s/). And then there's "dishes," where we add "-es" and pronounce it /ɪz/. These "-s," "-z," and "-ɪz" sounds are all allomorphs of the same plural morpheme. They mean the same thing (more than one), but they sound different depending on the word they're attached to. So, what makes a morpheme change its costume? Well, it's usually the phonological environment – basically, the sounds that are already in the word. Our brains and mouths are lazy, so we choose the variant that's easiest to pronounce. It's all about that flow, baby! Understanding morphemes – free, bound, and all their variations – is crucial for cracking the code of language. They're the fundamental pieces that give words their meaning and allow us to express ourselves in countless ways. Keep this knowledge in your back pocket, and you'll start seeing words in a whole new light! Affixes: The Building Blocks – Prefixes and Suffixes Alright, let's get into the fun part: affixes! Think of them as the LEGO bricks of the word world. They're those little bits and pieces we stick onto a word's stem to tweak its meaning or give it a new job in the sentence. Basically, affixes are morphemes that are attached to a stem. Let's zoom in on the two main types: prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes: Adding to the Front Prefixes are the affixes that get to stand at the beginning of a word. They're like the opening act, setting the stage for what's to come. Some common examples are "un-," "re-," and "pre-". They can dramatically alter a word's meaning. For instance, tacking "un-" onto "happy" gives you "unhappy" – changing a positive emotion to its opposite. "Re-" on "write" gives you "rewrite," meaning to write again. And "pre-" before "historic" creates "prehistoric," referring to a time before recorded history. See how a little addition at the front can totally flip things around? Prefixes are awesome! Suffixes: The Grand Finale Now, let's talk about suffixes. These affixes attach to the end of a word, like the grand finale of a fireworks show. Common suffixes include "-ing," "-ness," and "-ly." They're not just about changing meaning; they can also switch up a word's part of speech. Take "run," a verb. Slap an "-ing" on it, and you get "running," which can now act as a noun (a gerund) or an adjective (a participle). Add "-ness" to "happy," and you get "happiness," transforming an adjective into a noun. Similarly, "-ly" turns "quick" into "quickly," an adverb. Suffixes are powerful transformers! Derivational Morphemes: Word Alchemists Let's not forget about derivational morphemes. These are the truly creative affixes, the ones that can conjure entirely new words. Think of them as the word alchemists. They're usually prefixes and suffixes that are attached to stems. The suffix "-er" can turn the verb "teach" into the noun "teacher," someone who performs the action. The prefix "un-" can turn "breakable" into "unbreakable," completely reversing the property of being able to be broken. These affixes don't just tweak meanings; they bring entirely new words into existence, expanding the vocabulary landscape. They can also alter the part of speech. So, the next time you're struggling to find the right word, consider whether a derivational morpheme might just hold the key to unlocking a new one! Inflectional Morphology: Fine-Tuning Grammar Okay, so we've talked about the building blocks of words and how we can slap on prefixes and suffixes to create entirely new words. But what about when we just want to tweak a word to fit grammatically into a sentence? That's where inflectional morphology comes in! Think of it like this: derivational morphology (prefixes/suffixes) is like adding a new room to your house. You get a whole new space with a different purpose! Inflection, on the other hand, is like rearranging the furniture in a room to make it more functional. The room (the word) is still the same, but its function within the house (the sentence) is slightly altered. Inflection is the process of modifying a word to express grammatical categories like tense, number, gender, person, case, and agreement. And here's the key takeaway: inflection doesn't change the core meaning or category of the word. It just provides crucial grammatical information, like whether something happened in the past, is happening now, or will happen in the future. Unpacking the Purpose: Why Inflect? So, what's the big deal with inflection? Why bother changing words at all? Well, inflection is the way languages ensure that words play nicely together. It's how we signal relationships between words in a sentence and avoid ambiguity. Without it, we'd be left with a jumbled mess of words, and understanding each other would be a real headache. The key purpose of inflection is to provide grammatical information. Key Grammatical Features Marked by Inflection: A Deep Dive Let's break down some of the most common grammatical features that inflection helps us express: Tense: Tells us when something happened (past, present, or future). Did you walk, are you walking, or will you walk? Inflection! Number: Indicates how many things we're talking about (singular or plural). One cat versus many cats. Boom, inflection again! Gender: (In some languages) classifies nouns into categories like masculine, feminine, or neuter. While English doesn't have grammatical gender for nouns like many other languages, it does inflect pronouns for gender (he, she, it). Person: Indicates who is speaking (first person), who is being spoken to (second person), or who/what is being spoken about (third person). "I am," "you are," "he/she/it is." See how the verb changes? Inflection at work! Case: (In some languages) indicates the grammatical function of a noun or pronoun in a sentence. Think nominative (subject), accusative (direct object), genitive (possessive). English used to have a more elaborate case system, but now it's mostly visible in pronouns (I vs. me vs. my). Agreement: Ensures that related words "agree" in grammatical features. The most common example in English is subject-verb agreement: "The cat sits," but "The cats sit." The verb form changes depending on whether the subject is singular or plural. Introducing the Paradigm: A Word's Complete Inflectional Family Finally, let's talk about paradigms. A paradigm is simply the complete set of inflected forms for a particular word. For example, the paradigm for the English verb "to walk" would include "walk," "walks," "walked," "walking," and "walken" (or whatever the kids are saying these days). Think of it like a family portrait of all the different grammatical "versions" of a word. Each version has a slightly different job to do, but they're all related! Paradigms are super helpful for understanding how inflection works in a language and for spotting patterns in word formation. Grammatical Features: Agreement, Tense, Number, and More Okay, buckle up, word nerds! We're diving deep into the fascinating world of grammatical features. Think of these as the tiny tweaks and adjustments languages use to make sure everything agrees and makes sense. It's like the language is saying, "Hey, I know what you're talking about!" Agreement So, what is agreement? Simply put, it's when words in a sentence play nicely together and match in certain grammatical features. This is the correspondence in grammatical features between related words. Think of it like a secret handshake between words. English Example: You know how you say "The cat sits," but "The dogs sit"? That's agreement in action! The verb changes form to agree with the subject's number (singular or plural). Case Next up: Case! This refers to the grammatical function of a noun or pronoun in a sentence. It's often marked by inflection—those handy little changes we talked about earlier. Think of it as assigning roles to the nouns in a sentence. German/Latin Example (Hypothetical): Imagine a language where you could tell who's doing what just by the ending of the word! In Latin, "Marcus loquitur" means "Marcus speaks" (nominative case), but "Marco audio" might mean "I hear Marcus" (accusative case). Isn't that neat? Tense Time for Tense! This one's all about locating an action or event in time. Mostly we mark it on the verbs. Past, present, future—you know the drill. English Example: "I walk," "I walked," "I will walk." Simple, right? But those little changes tell you exactly when the walking happened. Number Let's talk about Number, shall we? This is all about indicating whether something is singular, plural, or sometimes even dual (for languages that like to be extra!). English Example: "Cat" versus "cats." One little "-s" and suddenly you've got a whole clowder of them! Gender Now we're getting into the fun stuff: Gender! And no, we're not talking about people. In many languages, nouns are assigned a gender—masculine, feminine, or neuter—and this affects the form of other words in the sentence. French/Spanish Example (Hypothetical): Imagine you're trying to describe a table. In French, "la table" is feminine, so you might say "la table belle" ("the beautiful table"). The adjective "belle" changes to agree with the table's gender. Person Let's not forget Person. This indicates who's talking (first person), who's being talked to (second person), and who or what is being talked about (third person). It's often marked on verbs by inflection. English Example: "I am," "you are," "he/she/it is." See how the verb "to be" changes depending on who's doing the being? Voice And what about Voice? This indicates the relationship between the subject and the action. Think active and passive voice. English Example: "He writes the letter" (active) versus "The letter is written by him" (passive). The verb form changes to show whether the subject is doing the action or being acted upon. Mood Finally, we have Mood! This expresses the speaker's attitude toward the action or state being described. Think indicative (facts), subjunctive (hypothetical), imperative (commands). Example (Hypothetical): In some languages, you might use a special verb form to say "I wish I were rich," indicating that it's just a wish, not a reality. Morphology Across Languages: A Typological Perspective Ever wondered why some languages sound like a smooth, flowing river while others resemble a carefully constructed Lego castle? Well, buckle up, language enthusiasts, because we're about to embark on a whirlwind tour of how wildly different languages can be when it comes to word structure! Different languages take radically different approaches to how they build words and convey meaning. Some like to keep things simple and separate, while others prefer to pack a whole sentence's worth of information into a single, mammoth word. It's like comparing a minimalist studio apartment to a fully furnished mansion! A World of Morphological Flavors Let's dive into the fascinating world of morphological typology – the classification of languages based on how they form words. Prepare to meet some linguistic characters! Isolating Languages: Keeping It Separate Think of isolating languages like Mandarin Chinese as the minimalists of the language world. They prefer to use individual words for individual concepts, with very few affixes. Meaning is primarily conveyed through word order. Example: In Mandarin, you might say "Wo he cha" 我喝茶, which translates directly to "I drink tea." Simple, right? The meaning comes from the order of those separate words. Agglutinative Languages: The Lego Builders Now, let's jump to the agglutinative languages, such as Turkish. These languages are like master Lego builders. They use many affixes, each with a clear and distinct meaning, and string them together to create complex words. It's like adding individual Lego bricks to build an elaborate structure. Example: In Turkish, "evlerinizden" means "from your houses." This single word is composed of: ev (house) ler (plural marker) iniz (your) den (from) Each piece adds a specific layer of meaning, clearly distinguishable from the others. Fusional Languages: The Culinary Artists Fusional languages, like Spanish, are more like culinary artists. Their affixes often encode multiple grammatical features simultaneously, making them harder to separate. It's like a chef who combines several ingredients into a single, flavorful sauce – you can taste each element, but they're blended into one. Example: In Spanish, consider the verb "hablé" (I spoke). The "-é" ending tells you not only that the action is in the past tense but also that the subject is "yo" (I). It's all wrapped up in one neat little package. Polysynthetic Languages: The Sentence-Words Finally, we arrive at the polysynthetic languages, like Inuktitut. These are the maximalists of the language world. They combine many morphemes into a single word, often expressing an entire sentence! It's like condensing a whole novel into a single, epic poem. Example: A classic example often cited (though complex and varying in exact representation) involves words that translate roughly to "He says that someone is causing it to be made to be ready to be eaten". One "word" conveys an entire complex scenario! These languages demonstrate the incredible diversity and creativity that can be found in the structure of human language. Understanding these differences opens up a whole new appreciation for the intricacies of communication! An inflectional morpheme alters a word's grammatical function. This morpheme does not create a new word. It changes tense, number, possession, or degree. The original word's core meaning remains unchanged. English uses inflectional morphemes minimally. These morphemes are suffixes only. They include -s, -es, -ed, -ing, -en, -'s, -er, and -est. What is the primary role of inflectional morphemes in sentence structure? Inflectional morphemes serve grammatical roles. They indicate grammatical relationships. These relationships exist within a sentence. They do not change a word's part of speech. Plural markers on nouns agree with verb forms. Tense markers on verbs indicate time. Possessive markers on nouns show ownership. These markers ensure grammatical correctness. In what ways are inflectional morphemes crucial for verb conjugation? Inflectional morphemes are essential for verb conjugation. Verb conjugation requires tense marking. It also requires agreement marking. Tense marking places actions in time. Agreement marking matches verbs to subjects. English uses inflectional suffixes. These suffixes denote person and number. Examples include "-s" for third-person singular. What distinguishes inflectional morphemes from derivational morphemes in terms of word meaning? Inflectional morphemes do not affect core word meaning. They modify grammatical function only. Derivational morphemes create new words. These new words have altered meanings. Inflectional morphemes are suffixes in English. Derivational morphemes can be prefixes or suffixes. Inflection adds grammatical information. Derivation creates different lexical items. So, there you have it! Inflectional morphemes might sound like a mouthful, but they're really just the subtle tweaks we add to words all the time without even thinking about it. Now you can impress your friends with your newfound grammar knowledge! According to the Cambridge Dictionary, the meaning of inflection in grammar is "a change in or addition to the form of a word that shows a change in the way it is used in sentences." The inflectional morphemes system in English is regarded as quite "poor" since it has quite "little inflectional morphology" as compared to other languages (Denham & Lobeck 158). Thus, there are only 8 inflectional morphemes that indicate the form and the tense of a word. Get a custom term paper on 8 Inflectional Morphemes in English: Full List & Examples The list of inflectional morphemes includes:s – is an indicator of a plural form of nounss' – marks the possessive form of nounss – is attached to verbs in the third person singulared – is an indicator of the past tense of verbsing – indicates the present participleen – marks past participleer – is attached to adjectives to show a comparative formest – is an indicator of the superlative form of adjectivesInflectional Morphemes: ExamplesHere are some examples of inflectional morphemes using in English. The verb "to mark" has many forms: mark (basic form), marking (present continuous), marked (past simple), etc. We add the inflectional morphemes (the endings) like -ed and -ing to the basic form of the verb to indicate its tense.Inflectional Morphemes: Main FeaturesIt is worth mentioning that inflectional morphemes do not create new words. They only change the form of a word indicating the "grammatical function" of a word (Denham & Lobeck 69). Thus, certain inflectional affixes serve their purpose to create specific forms of the word. That's their main difference from another morphemes type – derivational morphemes that are used to create new words in English. Due to the peculiarities of the English morphology, morphemes indicating plural form and past tense form can vary in pronunciation. So, some inflectional morphemes can have several allomorphs.For instance, the choice of allomorph in English morphology may depend on phonetic or grammatical conditions (Brinton & Brinton 91). Allomorphs that are phonetically determined indicate plural forms and present tense form [s], [z], [iz], and signs of the past tense form [t] and [d] in inflectional morphemes. Examples of this can be found when a word ends in a voiceless consonant or a fricative (cat, map). In these cases, the speaker should choose allomorph [s]. Whereas for words ending in voiced consonants or vowels, it is necessary to use allomorph [z]. In case a word ends in affricate, allomorph [iz] should be used.As for grammatically conditioned allomorphs, some of them are fish, sheep, mice, children, oxen, criteria, and stimuli. They are formed by not productive endings, which are "linguistic fossils" or borrowings (Brinton & Brinton 92).Morphological CompositionIn terms of the concept of inflectional morphemes, it is also important to single out the concept of morphs. According to Brinton and Brinton, a lexical morph is "the concrete realization of a morpheme," i.e., it is the way the word is actually pronounced (Brinton & Brinton 83). 1 hour! The minimum time our certified writers need to deliver a 100% original paper For instance, such words as fish or sheep do not have the definite realization of the plural form. They are written and pronounced in the same way as in singular. However, the word is used in the plural form (due to context). In English morphology, words have zero morphs, which do not have a phonetic or written realization.There are two types of morphs, free and bound. Bound morphs cannot occur as separate words; they can be only components of a word, whereas free morphs can be separate words; they are usually roots. It is necessary to point out that a morph can contain several lexical affixes in English. Thus, a simple word can have quite complicated morphological composition. This can be illustrated by the morphological analysis of the words me and his:me 2 morphemes { I } +his 2 morphemes { he } +Thus, there are no inflectional morphemes, and no allomorphs are used. Instead, new stems are created. In this case, such change is determined by the historical aspect. These forms were developed from the word form from Old English.8 Inflectional Morphemes & Second Language PhonologyPhonology is one of the first important aspects that influence affixation in English (Brinton & Brinton 11). It is the study of sounds in English. Reputedly, the range of sound which people can produce is extensive. People do not use in their native language every sound they can produce; the scope of sounds in each language is quite limited.Thus, in different languages occur, sounds are not used in other languages. For instance, such sounds as [Δ] can be quite confusing for learners of English as a second language, especially when there is no such sound in their native language. The sound [Δ] is often substituted by [d]. One can explain this by the parallel distribution of these sounds. Remember! This is just a sample You can get your custom paper by one of our expert writers Thus, [Δ] is produced at the upper teeth, and [d] is produced at the upper gum. This can be an explanation of why these sounds sound often substitute each other. For example, the following group of words can illustrate this phenomenon: that [dat], dog [dɑg], head [hɛd], leather [lɛΔə] leader [liΔə].Other examples of commonly substituted sounds are the following: [s] and [ʃ]. This set of sounds can also be characterized by parallel distribution; both sounds are produced approximately, likewise, at the upper gum. These sounds confusion may be exemplified by the following sets: sing [ʃɪŋ], sat [sat], loss [lɑs], fish [fɪʃ], miss [mɪʃ], push [pus].Of course, native speakers differentiate easily between these sounds, and, in fact, such sounds can be characterized by complementary distribution for them. However, a learner of English can confuse these sets of sounds due to their similar place of articulation, especially if there are no such sounds in the native language of this learner.In case similar sounds occur in the native language, a learner of English will differentiate between these sounds as well, and they are in the complementary distribution for this learner. However, if there are no such sounds in the native language, the pairs [Δ] and [d], [s] and [ʃ] will be in parallel distribution and, for example, such pairs as [Δ] and [b], [s] and [k] will be in complementary distribution.Thus, for such learners (not accustomed to such sounds), the following words will be pronounced as follows: Daddy [dædi], either [aidə], loathe [ləud], ship [sip], pass [pɑʃ], dish [diʃ], usher [ʌsə].Phonological ProcessesThere are several major phonological processes in English. One of the most common phonological processes is assimilation. Assimilation is a process in which one sound influences the other sound. This rule can be illustrated by the impact of nasal consonants on vowels.For instance, the sound [æ] (like in words cat [kæt], sat [sæt]) will be pronounced like [ã] before nasal sounds: Pam [pãm], Sam [sãm], pan [pãn]. Another important phonological process is aspiration. In English, voiceless consonants are aspirated when they occur at the beginning of the word or at the end of the word.It is necessary to tell that such kinds of consonants are not aspirated when they are preceded by s. So the pattern /t/ – [t˺] illustrates this phonological process. It can be exemplified by: sat [sat˺], met [me t˺], let [le t˺]. Get your first paper with 15% OFF Learn More Of course, many words can be characterized by several phonological processes. For instance, such set like /tɛnpeɪdʒz/ – [tʰɛmpʰeɪdʒəz] displays such processes as assimilation [n] – [m], aspiration [tʰ], deletion [dʒz] – [dʒz]. Another phonological process, exchanging syllable onsets, is often displayed in children's English (Denham and Lobeck 118).For instance, the word elephant can be pronounced as [ɛfəlɛnt]. Another phonological process is determined by dialectal varieties. For instance, in African American Vernacular English, final voiced consonants are often devoiced (Yavaş 62). This process can be illustrated by the following examples: [hɛp], [pik]. One more dialectal variety is Southern English, which is characterized by the substitution of [e] by [i] before nasal consonants (Yavaş 82).Parameters of English Consonants17 is between both 3s, 11 is vibrating, and 8-9 is closed. Sound: [Δ]16 is completely touching 5, 11 is vibrating, and 8-9 is closed. Sound: [r]16 is close to 5, 11 is open, and 8-9 is open. Sound: [l]14 is completely touching 8, 11 is open, and 8-9 is closed. Sound: [k]14 is completely touching 8, 11 is vibrating, and 8-9 is open. Sound: [g]2 on the bottom is close to 3 on the top, 11 is vibrating, and 8-9 is closed. Sound: [v]Both 2s are completely touching, 11 is open, and 8-9 is closed. Sound: [p]Both 2s are completely touching, 11 is vibrating, and 8-9 is open. Sound: [b]Conclusion: Inflectional Morphemes in EnglishInflectional morphemes show whether a word has the plural, comparative, or possessive form and whether it is in the past or present tense. Unlike derivational morphemes, they do not create new words. This essay tells how many inflectional morphemes are there in English, provides the full list of them, and gives some examples of inflectional morphemes using.Works CitedBrinton, L. J. & Brinton, D. M. The Linguistic Structure of Modern English. Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2010.Denham, K. Linguistics for Everyone: An Introduction. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2009.Yavaş, M. S. Applied English Phonology. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006. An affix is a bound morpheme that attaches to another morpheme to form either a new word or a new form of the same word. The two types of affixes in English are prefixes and suffixes. Affixes may be derivational or inflectional. Derivational affixes create new words. Inflectional affixes create new forms of the same word. Derivational is an adjective that refers to the formation of a new word from another word through derivational affixes. In English, both prefixes and suffixes are derivational. Inflectional is an adjective that refers to the formation of a new form of the same word through inflectional affixes. In English, only suffixes are inflectional. Many morphemes that other sources list as prefixes or suffixes are actually bases. A base is a morpheme that forms the foundation of a word. A free base is a morpheme that can stand on its own as a word. A bound base must attach to another morpheme to create a word. Bound bases are often misidentified as prefixes or suffixes. Base Meaning Example Afterfollowing after, behind After + Glow -> afterglow Archruling, dominating, most extremean + Arch -> anarch Algpainan + Alg + ese + ic -> analgesic Astrstar Astr + al -> astral Autself Aut + ism -> autism Backbehind Back + Date -> backdate BilifeBi + ome -> biome Bynear to, next toBy + Pass -> bypass Cideact of killingHome + i + Cide -> homicide Circaround, surroundingCirm + um + Vent -> circumvent Cracyrule, government, powerDeme + o + Cracy -> Democracy Cratsomeone who has powerTechn + o + Crat -> technocrat Cry icy cold, chill, frostCry + ic -> cryic Crypthidden, secreten + Crypt + ion -> encryption Cyclecircle, wheelre + Cycle -> recycle DemepeopleDeme + o + Graph + ic + s -> demographics DeutersecondDeuter + i + um -> deuterium Downfrom higher/greater to lower/lesserDown + Town -> downtown Doxbelief, praisepara + Dox -> paradox DutwoDu + al -> dualDu + o -> duoDu + et -> duet Ecehouse, dwelling place, habitationEce + o + sy + St + em -> ecosystem Electrelectric, electricityElectr + ic -> electric Emebloodan + Eme + i + a -> anemia Equsame Equ + al -> equalEqu + i + ty -> equity ExtraoutsideExtra + Curr + ic + ule + ar -> extracurricular Fic(e)make, cause, doSacr + i + Fice -> sacrificeHorr + I + Fic(e) -> horrific Forebefore, in frontFore + Arm -> forearm Fymake, cause makes the word a verbFalse + i + Fy -> falsify Gammarriage, unionpoly + Game + y -> polygamy Gerelating to the earth or its surfaceGe + o + Loge + y -> geology Gon(e)anglePenta + Gone + al -> pentagonal Gyrecircle, ringGyre + oid -> gyroid HindafterHind + Sight -> hindsight Hoodstate, condition, or qualityChild + Hood -> childhood HydrwaterHydr + ate -> hydrate Iatrhealing practicePede + Iatr + ic -> pediatric LogestudyCardi + o + Loge + y -> cardiology Log(ue)speechdia + Log(ue) -> dialog(ue) Macrlong, abnormally large, on a large scaleMacr + on -> macron Micrsmall, little, petty, trivial, slightMicr + on -> micron MultmanyMult + Ang + le -> multangle Necrdead, deathNecr + osis -> necrosis Offnon-standard, awayOff + Set -> offset Onimmediate proximity, locativeOn + Go + ing -> ongoing Onymname, wordAut + Onym -> autonym Opeeyehyper + Ope + i + a -> hyperopia Opssight examinationNecr + Ops + y -> necropsy Orthcorrecting or straighteningOrth + o + Pede + ic Outbetter, faster, longer, fartherOut + er -> outer Overexcessive, aboveOver + ly -> overly PaleooldPaleo + Lith + ic -> paleolithic Pathfeeling, suffering, emotion; disorder, diseasePsych + o + Path + y -> psychopathy Ped(e)footPede + al -> pedal Pedechild Pede + Iatr + ic + i + an -> pediatrician PhilelovePyre + o + Phile -> pyrophile PhobefearXene + o + Phobe + i + a -> xenophobia Phonesoundhomo + Phone -> homophone PhotelightPhote + o + Graph -> photograph Phyteplant, to growepi + Phyte -> epiphyte Plegeparalysis, strikepara + Plege + i + a -> paraplegia Pod(e)footPode + i + um -> podium Protefirst, originalProte + on -> proton Pseudfalse, imitationPseud + Onym -> pseudonym PyrefirePyre + o + Techn + ic -> pyrotechnic Quasipartly, almost, appearing to be but not reallyquasi-religious RetrbackwardsRetr + al -> retral Scopevisual examGastr + o + Scope + y -> gastroscopy Scribewrite de + Scribe -> describe Scriptwritetran + Script -> transcript Sectcutbi + Sect -> bisect SelfselfOne + Self -> oneself Shipstate or condition of, skill ofFri + end + Ship -> friendship Sociof companionship, of alliesSoci + al -> social Somecharacterized by, group ofFour + Some -> foursomeLoath + Some -> loathsome Sophwisdom, knowledgeAnthrope + o + Soph + ic + anthroposophic Stepfamily relation by remarriageStep + Mother -> stepmother Superabove, overSuper + Vise + or -> supervisor Teleat a distanceTele + Phone -> telephone TomecutMast + ec + Tome + y -> mastectomy TrithreeTri + Cycle -> tricycle Trophnourishment, growtha + Troph + y -> atrophy TwitwoTwi + Light -> twilight Underbelow, beneath, lower in grade or dignity, lesser, insufficientUnder + ling -> underling Uneone, consisting of only oneUne + i + Verse + al -> universal Upgreater, higher, betterUp + Right -> upright VicedeputyVice + Rege + ent -> viceregent Warethings of the same type or materialHard + Ware -> hardware Wisein what manner or directionClock + Wise -> clockwise Withagainst, opposite, from, toward, by, nearWith + Hold -> withhold A connecting vowel is a , , , or that joins together two morphemes. For example: Corn + e + al -> corneal Sign + i + Fy -> signify Ge + o + Graph + y -> geography Vace + u + um -> vacuum A prefix is a bound morpheme that attaches to the beginning of another morpheme to form either a new word or a new form of the same word. Prefixes are types of affixes. All prefixes in English are derivational, meaning the affixes create new words. A connecting vowel often follows a prefix. Prefix Meaning Example a-predicative adjective with progressive aspectawake, afloat, atremble a-/an-not, withoutacyclic, asexual, atonal, atheist, anemic amb-/am-/an-bothambidextrous, ambitendency, amputate amph-around, two, both, on both sidesamphiaster, amphitheatre, amphibian an-/ana-up, againstanacardiaceous, anode, analog ante-beforeantenatal, antechamber, antedate ant-against, oppositeanticlimax, anti-freeze, antiviral, antagonist, antivenom ap-/apo-away from, detachedaphelion, apogee, apomorphine be-equipped with, covered with, beset withbedeviled, becalm, bedazzle, bewitch bi-twobicycle, biped cis-on this side ofcislunar, cisgender co-/col-/com-/con-/cor-together, with, jointcoworker, coordinator, cooperation, cohabit, colleague, commingle, confederation, correlation contra-/contr-oppositecontradict, contraindication, contralateral counter-against, in opposition tocounteract, counterpart, counterfeit de-reverse action, get rid ofdebug, de-emphasize de-downdepress, descend demi-halfdemigod, demiquaver di-twodigraph, dicotyledon, digamy, dioxide dia-throughdialysis, diameter di-/dif-/dis-apartdiffer, dissect, divide dis-not, opposite of, reverse actiondisagree, disloyal, disconnect, disinformation el-/em-/en-inellipsis, emphasis, energetic em-/en-to make into, to put into, to get intoempower, enmesh ep-/epi-upon, at, close upon, in additionephemeron, epicentre, epidermis ex-formerex-wife, ex-husband, ex-boss, ex-colleague, ex-friend ex-out ofexit, expel, explode, exploit, explore, export heter/o-differentheterosexual, heteronym hemi-halfhemimorphic, hemisphere hom/o-samehomogenous, homologous hyper-excess, above, overhyperthermia hyp/o-deficient, under or below something, lowhypothermia, hypotonia, hyponatremia, hypothermia il-/im-/in-/ir-not, opposite ofillicit, impossible, inexact, irregular in-in, intoinsert, include infra-below, beneathinfrared inter-among, betweeninternet, intercede, international intra-inside, withinintravenous is/o-equalisochromatic, isotherm mal-badlymalnourish, maladjusted maxi-very long, very largemaxi-skirt mega-/megalo-great, largemegastar, megalopolis meta-after, along with, beyond, among, behindmetabolism, metaphysics mid-middlemidstream, midlife mini-smallminimarket, mini-room, minivan mis-wrong, astraymisinformation, misguide, misfortune mon/o-sole, onlymonogamy, monotone, monosyllabic neo-newneolithic, neoether non-notnonexistent, noncompete omni-allomnipotent, omnipresent, omnivore pan-all, worldwidepan-African, pandemic, panorama para-beside, beyondparallel, paraplegic, parasail per-through, completely, wrongly, exceedinglypermeate, permute peri-around, near or adjacentperihelion, periphrase pleo-/pleio-morepleonasm, pleiotypic poly-manypolygon, polyhedron post-after, behindpostposition, post-election, post-graduation, post-war, postfix, postpone, postscript pre-beforepreposition, prevent, previous, pre-election, pre-enter, pre-select, predict, prepare, preview preter-beyond, past, more thanpreternatural pro-for, forward, in favor ofpropulsion, propound, proponent pro-for, substitute, deputyproconsul, pronoun pro-beforeprocambium pros-towardprosthesis, proselyte, prosodemic re-again, backredo, revisit, rerun, reorganize semi-halfsemicircle sub-/sup-below, undersubmarine, subterranean, suburban, support supra-above, oversuprarenal sur-above, oversurreal, surrender, surplus sy-/syl-/sym-/syn-together, withsyllable, symbol, synthesis, system trans-across, overtransatlantic, transverse, transform uber-a lot, greatuberchic, ubergeek, ubersexual, uberwealthy ultr/a-beyondultramagnetic, ultrasonic, ultraviolet un-not, against, opposite of, reverse action, deprive of, release fromundesirable, undo, unequal, unexpected, unhappy, unlock, unnecessary, untie A suffix is a bound morpheme that attaches to the end of another morpheme to form either a new word or a new form of the same word. Suffixes are types of affixes. Suffixes in English may be derivational, meaning the suffixes create new words, or inflectional, meaning the suffixes create new forms of the same word. Inflectional Suffix Meaning Example -s/-esthird person singular presenteats, washes -edsimple past, regular past participlecalled, smiled -enirregular past participleeaten, written -ingpresent participlemarking, arguing, writing -s/-espluralcats, dogs, watches, axes -'s/-'*possessiveHeather's, daughters' -ercomparativefaster, prettier -estsuperlativefastest, prettiest *The possessive 's and ' is technically a clitic, not a suffix. A clitic is a morpheme with the syntactic characteristics of a word but phonologically depends on another word or phrase. Derivational Suffix Meaning Example -ableable to beagreeable, excitable, likeable, portable, preventable -acpertaining tocardiac, hemophiliac, maniac -ade act, action or process, productaccolade, blockade, calvacade, promenade -ageaction or processpassage, pilgrimage, voyage -aholic/-oholicone with an obsession forworkaholic, shopaholic, alcoholic -alrelating tobacterial, theatrical, natural -anrelating to, belonging toItalian, urban, African, American, suburban -ancestate or quality ofbrilliance, defiance, annoyance -anta person whoapplicant, immigrant, servant -antinclined to, tending tobrilliant, defiant, vigilant -arof or relating to, beinglunar, molecular, solar -ara person whobeggar, burglar, liar -arda person who does an actioncoward, drunkard, sluggard, wizard -aryof or relating toliterary, military, budgetary -atestate or quality ofaffectionate, desolate, obstinate -atemakes the word a verbactivate, evaporate, medicate -culediminutive, making something smallcapsule, miniscule, molecule, ridicule -domcondition of, state, realmboredom, freedom, wisdom -eereceiver, performernominee, employee, devotee -eerassociated with/engaged inauctioneer, engineer, volunteer -encestate or condition, actionabsence, dependence, negligence -ence + ycondition or qualityclemency, dependency, efficiency -entinclined to performing/causing, or one who performs/causescompetent, correspondent, absorbent -eraction or processflutter, ponder, stutter -era person who does an actionannouncer, barber, teacher -ernstate or quality ofeastern, northern, western -eserelating to a placeChinese, Congolese, Vietnamese -esquein the style ofKafkaesque, grotesque, burlesque -essfemaleactress, heiress, lioness -et + icrelating toathletic, energetic, poetic -ettediminutive, make something smallercigarette, diskette, kitchenette -fulfull ofhelpful, thankful, cheerful -i + alrelating tocelestial, editorial, martial -i + anrelating toMartian, utopian, pediatrician -i + asisdiseased conditionelephantiasis, psoriasis -ibleable to beaudible, plausible, legible -icrelating to, characterized byanalytic/al, comic/al, organic -ilerelating to, capable ofagile, docile, volatile -i + lyin what mannersloppily, steadily, zanily -inerelating tocanine, feminine, masculine -ingmaterialsbedding, frosting, roofing -ionaction or processcelebration, completion, navigation -ionstate or qualityattention, caution, confusion, fascination -i + oushaving the qualities of, full ofambitious, cautious, gracious -ishrelating to, characteristicapish, brutish, childish -ismstate or qualityaltruism, despotism, heroism -ista person, one who does an actionartist, linguist, pianist -iteresident of, follower, product ofsuburbanite, luddite, dynamite -itisinflammationappendicitis, tonsillitis -i + tystate, condition, or qualityabnormality, civility, necessity -iveinclined to, quality of, that whichattractive, expensive, repulsive -izecause, treat, becomeantagonize, authorize, popularize -lesswithoutfearless, helpless, homeless -letversion ofbooklet, droplet, inlet -likeresembling, characteristicchildlike, homelike, lifelike -lingyounger or inferiorduckling, underling -lyin what mannerbadly, courageously, happily -mentaction, resultmovement, placement, shipment -nessstate or qualitykindness, shyness, weakness -o + idresemblinghumanoid, tabloid, hemorrhoid -omatumor, swellingcarcinoma, osteoma, hematoma -ora person whoinventor, legislator, translator -or + yrelating toarmory, dormitory, laboratory -osisprocess, diseased conditiondiagnosis, prognosis, neurosis, psychosis -ousfull ofhazardous, humorous, wondrous -thstate or qualitydepth, length, strength -tystate, condition or qualityability, honesty, loyalty -ule + arrelating to or resemblingcellular, circular, muscular -u + ousstate or quality ofarduous, tumultuous, virtuous -ureaction, conditionclosure, erasure, failure -wardspecifies directionbackward, eastward, homeward -ymade up of, characterizedbrainy, fruity, geeky, gooey nerdy See also the Linguistics Girl Morphodex for more morphemes in English orthography. The Morphodex () is a collection in progress of English morphemes. I update the Morphodex as I work on my own word studies with the goal of weekly updates. Please feel free to contact me if you find an error. Affixes are bound morphemes that attach to the stem of a word to form either a new word or a new form of the same word. Prefixes and suffixes are the two types of affixes in the English language. See Teach a Student to Read and Linguist-Educator Exchange for more information about morphemes in the English language. Share on FacebookTweetSave An inflection is a change that signals the grammatical function of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and pronouns (e.g., noun plurals, verb tenses). In other words, inflectional morphemes are used to create a variant form of a word in order to signal grammatical information without changing the meanings of words. Inflectional suffixes have grammatical meaning only and cannot precede a derivational suffix. English has only eight inflectional suffixes: noun plural {-s} – "He has three desserts." noun possessive {-s} – "This is Betty's dessert." verb present tense {-s} – "Bill usually eats dessert." verb past tense {-ed} – "He baked the dessert yesterday." verb past participle {-en} – "He has always eaten dessert." verb present participle {-ing} – "He is eating the dessert now." adjective comparative {-er} – "His dessert is larger than mine." adjective superlative {-est} – "Her dessert is the largest." This list of inflectional morphemes can serve as the KEY MARKERS for recognizing form-class words. The presence of an inflectional suffix is a key formal test for determining form-class words because inflectional suffixes can combine with nearly all members of a single part of speech. As always in English, there are exceptions, as we will discuss below. Nouns take two inflectional morphemes, plural and possessive. Plural -s -es book + -s glass + -es books glasses Some plurals take a different morpheme: datum --> data medium --> media ox --> oxen moose --> moose Possessive -s Barbara + -s Barbara's When a singular possessive noun ends in –s or –z, it still takes the 's. The pronunciation of the 's just changes from the [s] sound to the [z] sound: bass --> bass's maze --> maze's The possessive of a plural noun ending in –s is pronounced just like the plural form. It's spelled with a simple apostrophe and no additional –s: five days' work the taxpayers' burden Verb Inflections English has a relatively simple system of verb inflections. Every verb has a base, uninflected or infinitive, form. There are only four inflectional morphemes that can attach to the base (infinitive) form: Inflection Morpheme Function Example Note that… present-tense inflections -s Used when subject is third-person singular noun or pronoun She usually sits here. The house stays cool at night. Verbs ending in –s take -es, e.g. toss à tosses. past-tense inflection -ed Used to indicate past tense of a regular verb. We rowed down the river. The inside of the canoe got pretty wet. Irregular verbs can inflect by changing their vowel (ride -> rode) or take no change (cut -> cut). Some change more than a vowel (go -> went). past-participle inflection -en Used with the linking verb have in the Main Verb Phrase Formula to form the present perfect and past perfect. I have already eaten. I had wanted a salad. For most regular verbs, the past-participle inflection is –ed, just like the past-tense inflection. present-participle inflection -ing Used with the helping verb be in the Main Verb Phrase Formula to form the present progressive. I am walking to the store. You are taking a class. The present-participle inflection also often occurs as a noun modifer (e.g. the sleeping baby; a rolling stone). In English, adjectives only take two inflections: the comparative and superlative. Comparative: -er taller smarter thicker crazier Superlative: -est tallest smartest thickest craziest Notice that all the example base morphemes only have one or two syllables. Adjectives with more than two syllables can be made comparative and superlative by the addition of words (more; most), not inflectional morphemes. Some adverbs can take the same comparative and superlative inflections (-er; -est) that adjectives take: drove longer ran faster played harder Many adverbs cannot take these inflections, however. Notice the awkwardness of the following phrases: He said slylier. She danced awkwardliest. Like some adjectives, these same examples can use more and most to create comparatives and superlatives: He said more slyly. She danced most awkwardly. To test your understanding of the concepts discussed on this page, begin with the link below for an example practice exercise: INFLECTIONAL SAMPLE EXERCISE For a bit more of a challenge, analyze the following sentence from The Brothers Karamazov for inflectional morphemes. While he was wearying every one with his tears and complaints, and turning his house into a sink of debauchery, a faithful servant of the family, Grigory, took the three-year-old Mitya into his care. To review your answers to these two samples, check the INFLECTIONAL MORPHEME SAMPLES ANALYSES page. Bound morphemes can do one of two different jobs. Inflectional morphology conveys grammatical information, such as number, tense, agreement or case. English has relatively few inflectional morphemes, but many other languages have much richer systems of inflectional morphology. Check Yourself 1. What type of grammatical information does the inflectional affix in the word speeches communicate? Number. Tense. Subject agreement. Case. 2. What type of grammatical information does the inflectional affix in the word climbed communicate? Number. Tense. Subject agreement. Case. 3. What type of grammatical information does the inflectional difference between he and him indicate? Number. Tense. Subject agreement. Case. Video Script We saw in our last units that words can be made up of morphemes, which are the smallest linguistic unit that links form with meaning. Morphemes can do a couple of quite different jobs in a word. Inflectional morphemes are morphemes that add grammatical information to a word. When a word is inflected, it still retains its core meaning, and its category stays the same. We've actually already talked about several different inflectional morphemes: The number on a noun is inflectional morphology. For most English nouns the inflectional morpheme for the plural is an –s or –es (e.g., books, cars, dishes) that gets added to the singular form of the noun, but there are also a few words with irregular plural morphemes. Some languages also have a special morpheme for the dual number, to indicate exactly two of something. Here's an example from Manam, one of the many languages spoken in Papua New Guinea. You can see that there's a morpheme on the noun woman that indicates dual, for exactly two women, and a different morpheme for plural, that is, more than two women. Manam (Papua New Guinea) /áine ŋara/ that woman singular /áine ŋaradiaru/ those two women dual /áine ŋaradi/ those women plural The tense on a verb is also inflectional morphology. For many English verbs, the past tense is spelled with an –ed, (walked, cooked, climbed) but there are also many English verbs where the tense inflection is indicated with a change in the vowel of the verb (sang, wrote, ate). English does not have a bound morpheme that indicates future tense, but many languages do. Another kind of inflectional morphology is agreement on verbs. If you've learned French or Spanish or Italian, you know that the suffix at the end of a verb changes depending on who the subject of the verb is. That's agreement inflection. Here are some examples from French. You can see that there's a different morpheme on the end of each verb depending on who's doing the singing. French 1st je chante I sing 2d tu chantes you sing 3d elle chante she sings 1st nous chantons we sing 2d vous chantez you (pl.) sing 3d elles chantent they sing And in some languages, the morphology on a noun changes depending on the noun's role in a sentence; this is called case inflection. Take a look at these two sentences in German: The first one, Der Junge sieht Sofia, means that, "The boy sees Sofia". Look at the form of the phrase, the boy, "der Junge". Now, look at this other sentence, Sofia sieht den Jungen, which means that "Sofia sees the boy". In the first sentence, the boy is doing the seeing, but in the second, the boy is getting seen, and the word for boy, Junge has a different morpheme on it to indicate its different role in the sentence. That's an example of case morphology, which is another kind of inflection. German Der Junge sieht Sofia. The boy sees Sofia. Sofia sieht den Jungen Sofia sees the boy.

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