

# Morphology



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# Objectives

This course aims at :

- developing students **knowledge** about different word formation processes that are common to the English language ;
- developing students' skills to **analyse** the internal structure of words;
- developing students' ability to **use** different forms of words correctly in different grammatical contexts .

# Introduction

***Prerequisites :***

- B2 English level (upper-intermediate) ;
- basic knowledge about English parts of speech (such as nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.)

[cf. Murphy, R. (2004).English Grammar in Use. A self-study reference and practice book for intermediate students of English. Cambridge University Press.] [cf. Vince, M. (2008). Macmilan English Grammar in Context. Intermediate. Macmillan Publishers.]

# I Prerequisite Test

## Objectives

This test will help you to make sure that you possess the knowledge and skills necessary for the successful completion of this course. If you fail the test, please go back to the resources provided above.

You can score 5 points for each question. For the successful completion of this test you need to score at least 70 points.

Exercice

[solution n°1 p.25]

Fill in the gaps using the appropriate form of the adjective in brackets.

Jack is  (tall) than Mike, but George is  (tall) of us all.

Exercice : Use the appropriate form of the words in brackets to fill in the gaps.

[solution n°2 p.25]

This bike is  (good) than mine, but that one is much  (bad).

Exercice : Use the correct form of the pronoun to fill in the gaps.

[solution n°3 p.25]

They arrived late at night  luggage being lost. I helped  as much as I could.

Exercice

[solution n°4 p.25]

Match the following words to their parts of speech.

to paint

wonderful

plate

blue

quietly

sky

easily

skin

nice

to jump

to breathe

noun	verb	adjective	adverb

Exercice : Choose the correct word from the list below.

[solution n°5 p.25]

The \_\_\_\_\_ are in the yard.

- child
- childs
- children
- child's

Exercice : Choose the correct word from the list below.

[solution n°6 p.26]

There are two \_\_\_\_\_ on the table.

- books
- beek
- book
- beek's

Exercice : Choose the correct word from the list below.

[solution n°7 p.26]

The last \_\_\_\_\_ fell from the tree.

- leave
- leafs
- leaves
- leaf's

Exercice : Choose the correct word from the list below.

[solution n°8 p.26]

I was \_\_\_\_\_ at what he did.

- angrily
- angry
- angrier

Exercice : Choose the appropriate word from the list below.

[solution n°9 p.26]

Walk \_\_\_\_\_, or you will wake the patient.

- quietly
- quiet

Exercice : Choose the appropriate word from the list below.

[solution n°10 p.26]

\_\_\_\_\_ cars are very fast.

- this
- these
- that

Exercice : Choose the appropriate form of the verb to fill in the gap.

[solution n°11 p.27]

I \_\_\_\_\_ in the lake when I was a child.

- swam
- swims
- swimming
- swimmmed

Exercice : Choose the appropriate form of the verb from the list below.

[solution n°12 p.27]

I have \_\_\_\_\_ my English book.

- losed
- loosed
- losen
- lost

Exercice : Choose the appropriate form of the verb from the list below.

[solution n° 13 p.27]

What time did they \_\_\_\_\_ ?

- started
- start
- starts
- starten

Exercice : Choose the correct preposition from the list below.

[solution n° 14 p.27]

We left for our fishing spot \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday at 3:30 am

- at
- in
- during
- on

Exercice : Choose the appropriate word from the list below.

[solution n° 15 p.28]

I met my friend Jack at the parking lot yesterday. I told \_\_\_\_\_ your story.

- her
- his
- him
- he

Exercice : Choose the appropriate word from the list below.

[solution n° 16 p.28]

She \_\_\_\_\_ swim very well when she was a child.

- could
- canned
- can
- cans



Exercice : Choose the appropriate pronoun from the list below.

[solution n° 17 p.28]

This doesn't look like my book. It must be \_\_\_\_\_.

- your
- you
- yours

Exercice : Choose the appropriate form of the verb from the list below.

[solution n° 18 p.28]

My article \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

- was publishing
- were publishing
- was published
- were published

Exercice : Choose the appropriate form from the list below.

[solution n° 19 p.29]

I prefer this chair. It is \_\_\_\_\_.

- comfortabler
- more comfortable

Exercice

[solution n° 20 p.29]

Fill in the gaps using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.

Alice was \_\_\_\_\_ (to begin) to get very tired of \_\_\_\_\_ (to sit) by her sister on the bank, and of \_\_\_\_\_ (to have) nothing to do : once or twice she had \_\_\_\_\_ (to peep) in to the book her sister was \_\_\_\_\_ (to read), but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what \_\_\_\_\_ (to be) the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations ?" (from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll)

## II Morphology as a level of linguistic analysis

What is morphology ? Why do we study it ? And how can it help us to become proficient speakers of English ? These are some of the questions that we will try to answer in the present chapter.

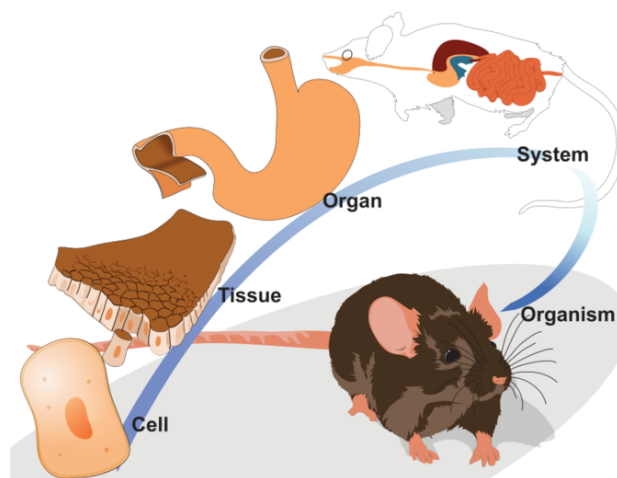
Upon the completion of this activity you will be able to :

- define morphology as a field of study ;
- use the basic terms which are necessary to discuss issues in morphology.

### 1. Levels of linguistic analysis

#### *Five levels of linguistic analysis*

**Language** has a very complex structure which, in terms of its organisation, can be likened to a **living organism**. As you, probably, know, any living organism can be studied **at different levels** : **cells** combine together to create **tissues**, tissues compose **organs** which, in turn, combine into **systems**, and all systems together finally create a living **organism** functioning as a single unit.



*Levels of organisation*

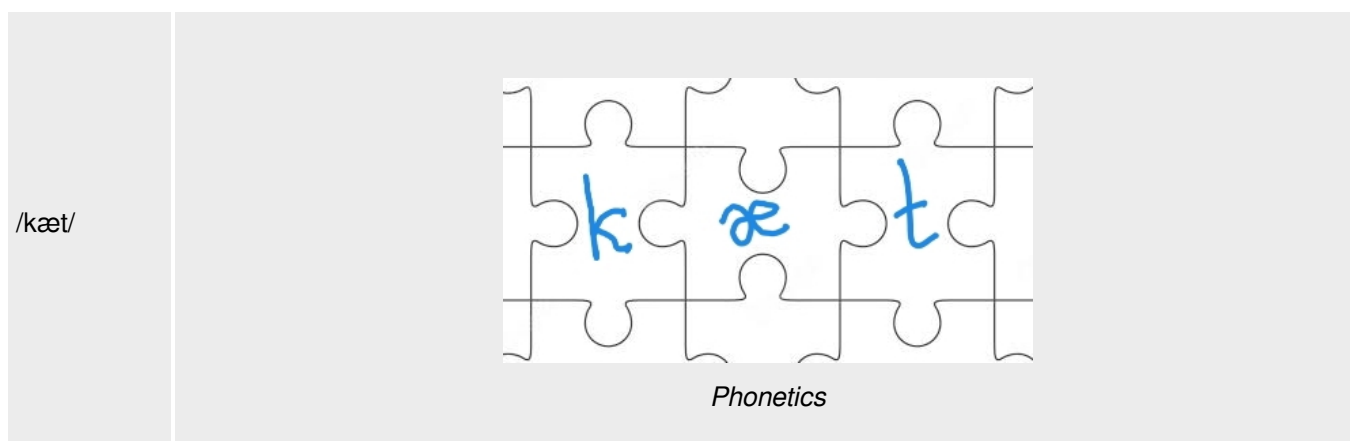
The same can be said about language. Individual **sounds** combine into **morphemes**, morphemes make **words**, words create **sentences**, and sentences link to form a **text**. All these elements of language, being closely related to each other, can, nevertheless, be analysed separately at their own structural level.

Therefore, the following five levels of linguistic analysis can be distinguished :

- PHONETICS
- MORPHOLOGY
- SYNTAX
- SEMANTICS
- PRAGMATICS

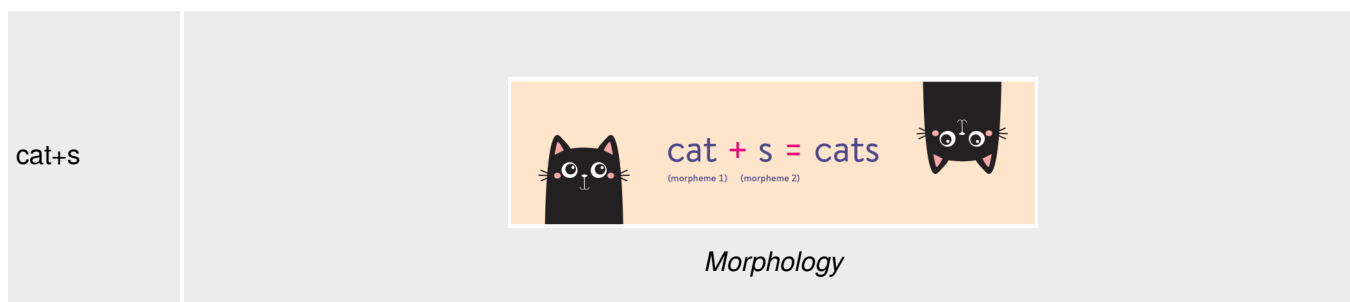
### 🔍 Definition: Phonetics

**Phonetics** is a branch of linguistics that studies how humans produce and perceive **sounds** of speech. The main object of study at this level is called a **phoneme**.



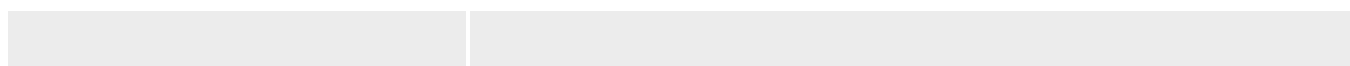
### 🔍 Definition: Morphology

**Morphology** studies the **internal structure of words**, how words can be divided into smaller **meaningful** units - **morphemes**.

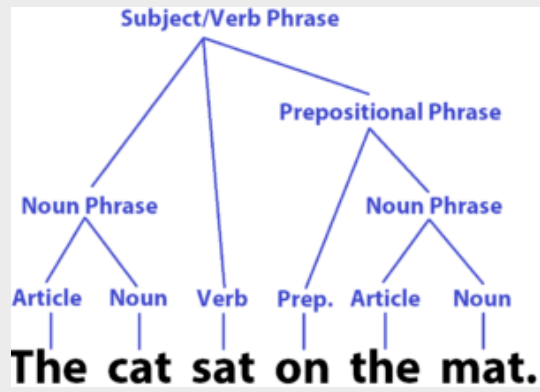


### 🔍 Definition: Syntax

**Syntax** studies how words combine together in a **sentence**.



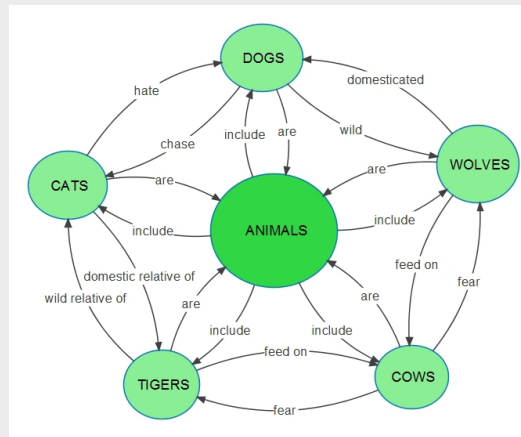
The cat sat on the mat.



**Q** Definition: Semantics

**Semantics** studies **word meanings** and relations between them in the lexicon.

Cats, dogs, wolves, tigers

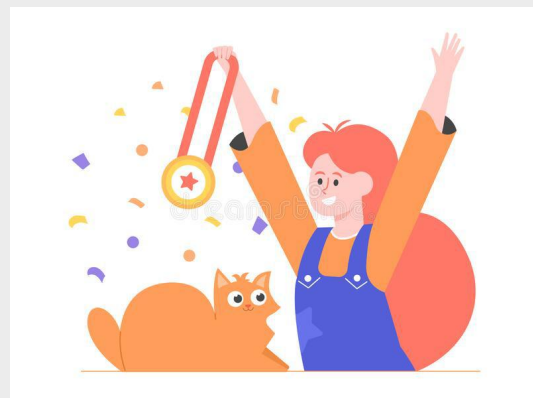


Semantics

**Q** Definition: Pragmatics

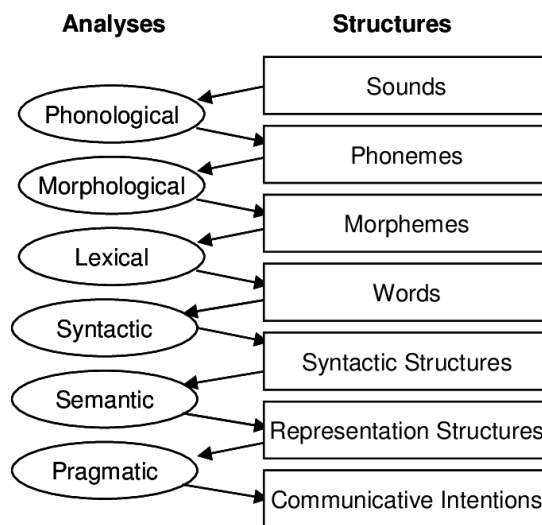
**Pragmatics** is a branch of linguistics that studies how language is **used** in different **social contexts**.

The cat Kitty wins the first prize.



La pragmatique

The relations between these levels of linguistic analysis are neatly summarized in the following chart (adapted from T. Winograd):



*Levels of Linguistic Analysis*

**Note:** What is the place of grammar among the levels of linguistic analysis mentioned above?

In fact, **grammar** is a combination of **morphology** and **syntax**. Therefore, the study of morphology is part of the general grammar course.

## 2. Morphology

### 💡 Fundamental

'Greek' morph- (shape, form) + -ology (the study of something)

Morphology studies the **smallest meaningful units** of language - **morphemes**.

### ⚠ Warning

Do not confuse morphemes with sounds or syllables which are not meaningful !

### 🔍 Example

Look at the following words. How many sounds and syllables do they contain ? Try to divide these words into meaningful elements. How many meaningful elements can you identify in their structure ? Compare your answers to the answers provided on the next page.

**cats**

**category**

### 3. Discussion

**cat** (domestic animal) + **s** (plural) → two morphemes (**but** / four sounds and one syllable - cats)

**category** → one morpheme (**but** / eight sounds and four syllables - ca-te-go-ry)

In the word **category**, the sequences of sounds 'cat' and 'gory' are not meaningful. In terms of meaning, the word 'category' has nothing to do with either cats or blood. Therefore, these sequences of sounds can not be considered morphemes.

### 4. Paradigmatic and Syntagmatic Morphology

#### 💡 *Fundamental*

Morphology can be approached from two different perspectives - **paradigmatic** and **syntagmatic**.

#### ⚙️ *Method: The Syntagmatic Perspective : Inflectional Morphology*

Approached from the syntagmatic perspective, morphology studies how the choice of a word form depends on the word's relation to other words in the sentence. Such study is called **inflectional morphology**.

#### 🔍 *Example*

I **walk** every day. (I → walk)

She **walks** every day. (She → walks)

We are **walking** now. (now → walking)

The choice of a particular form of the word 'to walk' depends on the context : '**I**' requires the form '**walk**', '**she**' requires the form '**walks**', and '**now**' requires the form '**walking**'. All these forms represent the same word in different grammatical contexts.

#### ⊕ *Extra*

**Inflectional morphology** studies how the same entity takes different forms in different contexts. Look at the pictures below. You can see the same person in both pictures. Her looks are very different, however. Why ?



*Lady Gaga with and without makeup*

A person may look very different in different social contexts. We wear casual clothes at home and an evening gown at a cocktail party. The same with words. One word may take one suffix in one context and another suffix in another context.

### ⚙️ *Method: The Paradigmatic Perspective : Derivational Morphology*

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Approached from the paradigmatic perspective, morphology studies how different words are grouped together into conceptual categories by sharing certain elements in their internal structure. Such study is called **derivational morphology**.

### 🕒 *Example*

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- *play*
- *player*
- *playful*

All these words are related to the idea of 'playing.' They share the same element **-play-**.

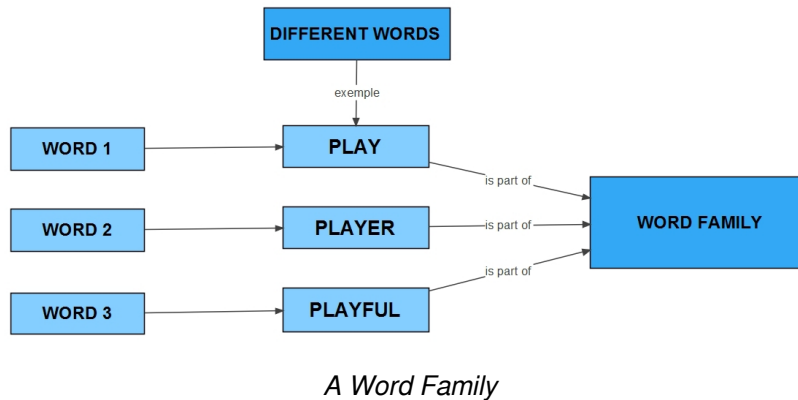
- *worker*
- *writer*
- *builder*
- *painter*

Here, all words refer to people who perform a particular type of action. They share the same element **-er**.

- *tender**ness***
- *mad**ness***
- *red**ness***

In this group, all words refer to a particular quality. They share the same element **-ness**.

In each of these groups, words share the same structural units - morphemes (-play-, -er, -ness) - which allows us to group them together into the same conceptual categories - **word families**.



⊕ Extra

**Derivational morphology** studies different words that are related to each other by the fact that they share the same element in their internal structure. Look at the picture below. You can see a group of people. These people look similar, however. Why ?



*Different people, similar traits*

Family members share some genetic information and, therefore, look similar. They are, nevertheless, different entities - different people. The same with words. Different words may share certain structural elements which put them into the same conceptual category.

⚠ Warning

Inflectional morphology studies different **forms of the same word**, whereas derivational morphology focuses on how **new words** are formed.

📎 Note: How can the study of morphology help you become competent speakers of English ?

To become competent speakers of English it is important to be able to :

- **recognize different forms of the same word.** You should know, for example, that the forms 'be' and 'was' represent the same word although they do not even start with the same letter !



- **use them in the appropriate grammatical contexts.** For example, we use 'be' after modal verbs (You should **be** careful !), and we use 'was' in the past tense (He **was** careful). Sentences like 'You should was careful' or 'He be careful' are ungrammatical.

These skills are developed by the study of inflectional morphology which will be discussed in detail in chapter 1 of the present course.

On the other hand, it is important to be able to :

- **recognise different word formation patterns.** Most dictionaries, for example, do not provide separate entries for such words as 'helplessly' or 'helplessness.' However, if you know the meaning of the morphemes -ly and -ness, you will easily understand those words from the definition of the word 'helpless' provided by the dictionary.
- **use words with similar meaning as different parts of speech.** You know the adjective red. Now, imagine you want to express the same idea, but the structure of your sentence requires a noun - 'I tried to hide the \_\_\_\_\_ of my cheeks'. If you know that the most productive suffix used to form adjectives from nouns in the English language is -ness, your chances to come up spontaneously with the correct form will be very high.

Therefore, the study of derivational morphology will also equip you with important tools necessary to become a proficient speaker of English. This perspective will be dealt with in chapters 2 and 3.

\* \*

\*

Morphology is one of the levels of linguistic analysis that is part of grammar. Morphology studies the internal structure of words and how they can be divided into the smallest meaningful units - morphemes. It can be approached from two different perspectives : syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Approached from the syntagmatic perspective, morphology studies how the same word takes different forms in different grammatical contexts. Approached from the paradigmatic perspective, morphology investigates different word formation processes. Both perspectives are important for those who would like to improve their productive skills in English.

# III Morphemes and Allomorphs. Types of Morphemes

## 1. Allomorphs

### 💡 Fundamental

The same morpheme can have different variants in different contexts.

### 🔗 Example

Compare the following words: dogs, horses, cats, tables, fists, checks, judges, eyelashes, days.

Is the **-s** of the plural pronounced in the same way in all these words ?

[s]	[z]	[ɪz] or [əz]
cats	dogs	horses
fists	tables	judges
checks	days	eyelashes

The plural **-s** has three phonetic variants. It is pronounced as :

- [s] : if it is preceded by a **voiceless consonant** such as t, k, p, f etc.
- [z] : if it is preceded by a **vowel** or a **voiced consonant** such as b, d, g etc.
- [ɪz] or [əz] : after the **sibilants** such as s, z, ʃ, ʒ.

In this case we say that the plural morpheme -s has three **allomorphs**. The choice of the allomorph depends on the phonetic context, namely the type of sound that immediately precedes this morpheme. Its meaning does not change, however. In all the words mentioned above, it is used to mark the plural form.

### 🔍 Definition: Allomorphe

An **allomorph** is a phonetic variant of a morpheme. Allomorphs of one morpheme have the **SAME MEANING**, but **DIFFERENT PRONUNCIATION**.

⊕ *Complement: Think of the following questions, then check your answers on the next page.*

- How many allomorphs does the past tense morpheme **-ed** have ?
- What phonological factors determine their distribution ? Draw a table similar to the one given above for the plural -s. Give your examples.
- Can you think of allomorphs that are not determined by phonological factors ?

## 2. Discussion

*Allomorphs of the past tense morpheme -ed*

<b>[t]</b>	<b>[d]</b>	<b>[ɪd]</b>
after voiceless consonants other than [t]	after vowels and voiced consonants other than [d]	after [d] or [t]
fished	played	hunted
checked	buzzed	painted
helped	grabbed	landed

*Examples of allomorphs that are not determined by phonological factors.*

Root morphemes can have allomorphs that are not determined by phonological factors :

knife /naɪf/ - knife-s /naɪv/

breath (n) /breθ/ - breathe (v) /brɪ :ð/

record (v) /rɪ'kɔ :d/ - record (n) /'rekəd/

## 3. Types of Morphemes

💡 *Fundamental*

Morphemes can be classified according their:

- **meaning**
- **structure**

### *Meaning*

Morphemes contribute differently to the general meaning of the word they compose. Therefore, they can be divided into two major categories :

- **roots** whose meaning is more precise and evokes a particular type of situation ;
- **affixes** whose meaning is much broader. They specify different aspects of the situation evoked by the root morpheme.

## 🔗 Example

Compare the following words divided into morphemes: help-ful, un-help-ful, help-ful-ness, help-ful-ly, help-er, help-less, help-less-ly, help-less-ness.

The part of the word that evokes a particular type of situation in all these words is **HELP** (assisting someone who is in trouble). This is the most meaningful part of the word and is called a **root morpheme**.



*The type of situation evoked by the root morpheme HELP*

Other morphemes such as -ful, -ness, -ly, -er specify different aspects of the situation evoked by the root HELP. For example, **-ful** means that someone or something possesses the quality expressed by the root (in our case, being able to assist someone in trouble), **-less**, on the contrary, marks the absence of such quality (being unable to assist someone in trouble). Such morphemes are called **affixes**.

## Structure

In terms of structure, morphemes can be divided into **free** and **bound**. Free morphemes can function as words by themselves, whereas bound morphemes must be attached to another form to be able to function as a word.

🔗 *Example: Compare root morphemes of the words in the left column to those in the right column.*

hear - ing	audi - ence
en - large	magn - ify
perform - ance	rend - ition
white -ness	clar - ity
dark - en	obfusc - ate
seek - er	applic - ant

### *Free and Bound Morphemes*

In the left column, all root morphemes ( -hear-, -large-, -perform-, -white-, -dark-, -seek-) can function as words by themselves (hear, large, perform, etc.). These are **free morphemes**.

By contrast, the root morphemes of the words in the right column can not function as words without the necessary affixes (magn\*, rend\*, clar\*, obfusc\*, applic\*).

These are **bound morphemes**.

### **Warning**

All **affixes** are **bound** morphemes because they can not function as words without being attached to a root morpheme.

### Types of affixes

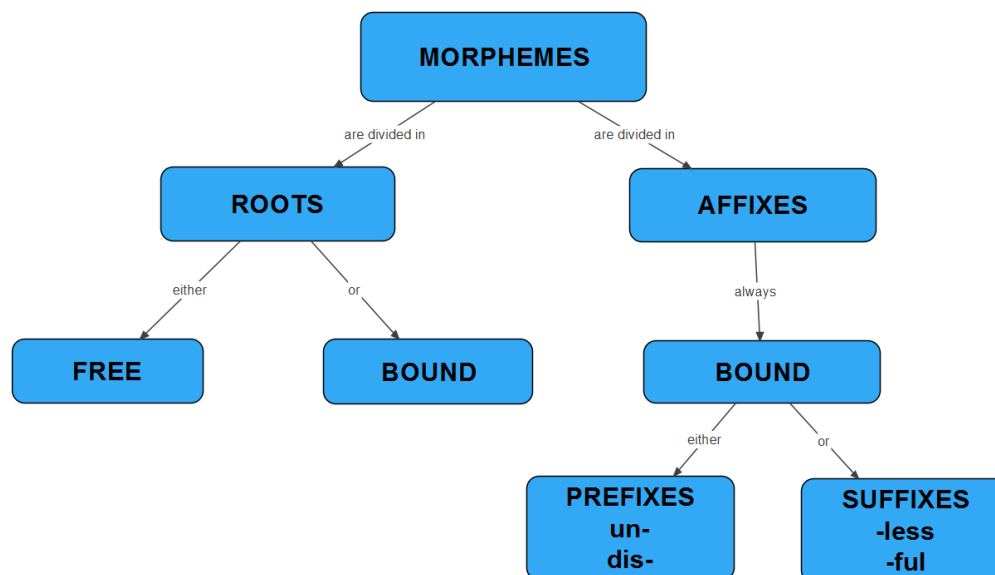
English affixes can be divided into two major groups according to their place in the word with respect to the root morpheme.

Affixes that precede the root morpheme are called **prefixes** :

- **im**possible
- **dis**locate
- **be**friend

Affixes that follow the root morpheme are called **suffixes** :

- friends**s**
- grateful**ful**
- care**less**



### Types of morphemes

\* \*  
\*

In this chapter we had a closer look at morphemes and their types. We have found out that morphemes can have different phonological variants called allomorphs.

According to their meaning, morphemes can be divided into :

- roots
- affixes

According to their structure, morphemes can be divided into :

- bound
- free

Roots can be either bound or free, whereas affixes are always bound.

Affixes can be further divided into :

- prefixes
- suffixes

In the next chapter we will use this knowledge to develop our understanding of the syntagmatic perspective to morphology.

# IV

Exercise

[solution n°21 p.29]

ible   house   dis   form   magn   ly   audi   ence   greet   the   out   fast

free morphemes	bound morphemes

Exercise

[solution n°22 p.30]

How is the -s of the plural pronounced in the following words ?

cars   locks   walls   churches   chairs   notes   palaces   pets   maps   prizes   legs  
matches

[S]	[Z]	[Iz] or [əz]

According to their meaning, morphemes are divided in

- roots
- branches
- affixes
- fixators

According to their structure, morphemes are divided in

- attached
- free
- frequent
- bound

An allomorph is a  of a morpheme.

Morphemes can be classified according to their  and .



# Exercises solution

## > Solution n° 1

Exercice p. 5

Fill in the gaps using the appropriate form of the adjective in brackets.

Jack is taller (tall) than Mike, but George is the tallest (tall) of us all.

## > Solution n° 2

Exercice p. 5

This bike is better (good) than mine, but that one is much worse (bad).

## > Solution n° 3

Exercice p. 5

They arrived late at night their luggage being lost. I helped them as much as I could.

## > Solution n° 4

Exercice p. 5

Match the following words to their parts of speech.

noun	verb	adjective	adverb
sky	to breathe	blue	quietly
plate	to jump	nice	easily
skin	to paint	wonderful	

## > Solution n° 5

Exercice p. 6

The \_\_\_\_\_ are in the yard.

- child
- childs
- children

- child's

> **Solution n°6**

Exercice p. 6

There are two \_\_\_\_\_ on the table.

- books
- beek
- book
- beek's

> **Solution n°7**

Exercice p. 6

The last \_\_\_\_\_ fell from the tree.

- leave
- leafs
- leaves
- leaf's

> **Solution n°8**

Exercice p. 6

I was \_\_\_\_\_ at what he did.

- angrily
- angry
- angrier

> **Solution n°9**

Exercice p. 7

Walk \_\_\_\_\_, or you will wake the patient.

- quietly
- quiet

> **Solution** n° 10

Exercice p. 7

\_\_\_\_\_ cars are very fast.

- this
- these
- that

> **Solution** n° 11

Exercice p. 7

I \_\_\_\_\_ in the lake when I was a child.

- swam
- swims
- swimming
- swimmmed

> **Solution** n° 12

Exercice p. 7

I have \_\_\_\_\_ my English book.

- losed
- loosed
- losen
- lost

> **Solution** n° 13

Exercice p. 8

What time did they \_\_\_\_\_ ?

- started
- start
- starts
- starten

> **Solution n° 14**

Exercice p. 8

We left for our fishing spot \_\_\_\_\_ Sunday at 3:30 am

- at
- in
- during
- on

> **Solution n° 15**

Exercice p. 8

I met my friend Jack at the parking lot yesterday. I told \_\_\_\_\_ your story.

- her
- his
- him
- he

> **Solution n° 16**

Exercice p. 8

She \_\_\_\_\_ swim very well when she was a child.

- could
- canned
- can
- cans

> **Solution n° 17**

Exercice p. 9

This doesn't look like my book. It must be \_\_\_\_\_.

- your
- you
- yours

> **Solution n° 18**

Exercice p. 9

My article \_\_\_\_\_ yesterday.

- was publishing
- were publishing
- was published
- were published

> **Solution n° 19**

Exercice p. 9

I prefer this chair. It is \_\_\_\_\_.

- comfortabler
- more comfortable

> **Solution n° 20**

Exercice p. 9

Fill in the gaps using the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.

Alice was beginning (to begin) to get very tired of sitting (to sit) by her sister on the bank, and of having (to have) nothing to do : once or twice she had peeped (to peep) in to the book her sister was reading (to read), but it had no pictures or conversations in it, "and what is (to be) the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversations ?" (from Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll)

> **Solution n°21**

Exercice p. 23

free morphemes	bound morphemes
out	ible
house	dis
fast	audi
the	ly
greet	ence
form	magn

> **Solution n°22**

Exercice p. 23

How is the -s of the plural pronounced in the following words ?

[S]	[Z]	[IZ] or [əZ]
pets	legs	palaces
notes	walls	matches
locks	chairs	prizes
maps	cars	churches

> **Solution n°23**

Exercice p. 24

According to their meaning, morphemes are divided in

- roots
- branches
- affixes
- fixators

> **Solution** n°24

Exercice p. 24

According to their structure, morphemes are divided in

- attached
- free
- frequent
- bound

> **Solution** n°25

Exercice p. 24

An allomorph is a **phonetic variant** of a morpheme.

> **Solution** n°26

Exercice p. 24

Morphemes can be classified according to their **meaning** and **structure**.