

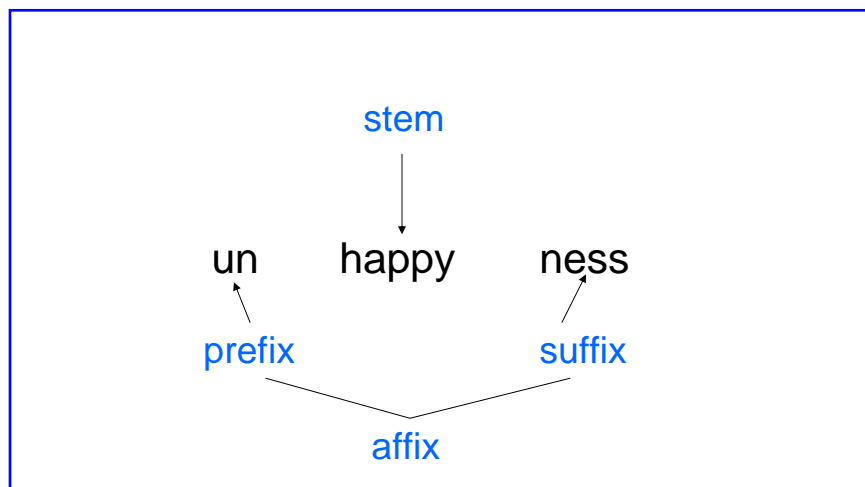


An Animated and Narrated Glossary of
Terms used in Linguistics
presents

Morpheme



Word Composition





Definition

In concatenative morphology, a **morpheme** is the **smallest semantically meaningful unit** of a language.

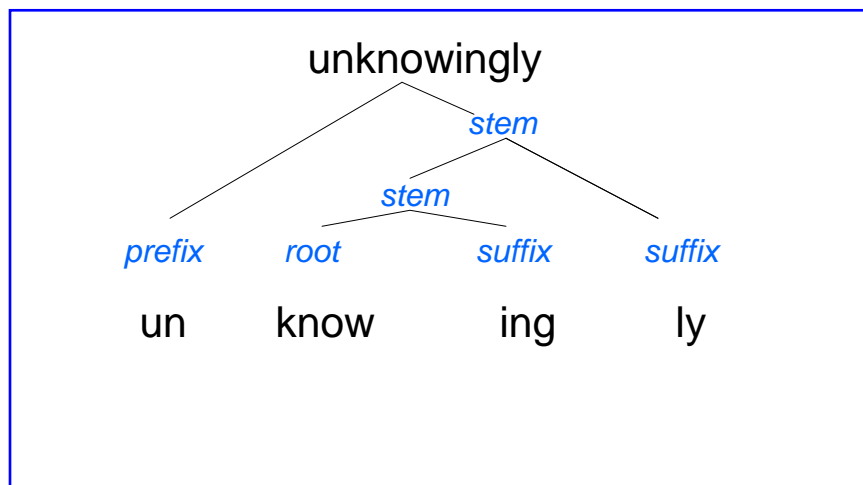
e.g. *un-* = negation
 -ness = nominal form
 happy = ☺

Assumption: words can be decomposed
(=concatenative).

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Stems and Roots



Slide 4



Free Morpheme

Some morphemes are standalone words.

E.g. *happy, joy, purple, possible, ...*

Free morphemes can function as standalone words.



Bound Morpheme

Morphemes that are not words in themselves, and must be attached to another morpheme are called **bound morphemes**

E.g. *un-, re-, -ness, -ment, ...*



Non-Concatenative Cases

Breaking a word up into morphemes is not always easy/feasible.

e.g.

feet = foot + plural ?

sang = sing + past tense?

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Further Reading

- Anderson, Stephen (1992) *A-morphous Morphology*. Cambridge University Press.
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- Matthews, Peter H. (1991) *Morphology*, 2nd edition. Cambridge University Press.
- Spencer, Andrew (1991) *Morphological Theory*. Blackwell.

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香港浸會大學
HONG KONG BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



The End

Wee, Lian Hee and Winnie H.Y. Cheung (2009)
An animated and narrated glossary of terms used in Linguistics.
Hong Kong Baptist University.