



Morphology

"Maybe in order to understand mankind, we have to look at the word itself. Mankind. Basically, it's made up of two separate words- 'mank' and 'ind.' What do these words mean? It's a mystery, and that's why so is mankind."

Jack Handey, *Deep Thoughts*

The Onion 36.33 — 20 SEPTEMBER 2000

William Safire Orders Two Whoppers Junior

NEW YORK—Stopping for lunch at a Manhattan Burger King, New York Times 'On Language' columnist William Safire ordered two "Whoppers Junior" Thursday. "Most Burger King patrons operate under the fallacious assumption that the plural is 'Whopper Juniors,'" Safire told a woman standing in line behind him. "This, of course, is a grievous grammatical blunder, akin to saying 'passerbys' or, worse yet, the dreaded 'attorney generals.'" Last week, Safire patronized a midtown Taco Bell, ordering "two Big Beef Burritos Supreme."

Morphemes and allomorphs

- Morphology is the study of morphemes and their behavior.
- A **morpheme** is the minimal unit of meaning.
- *dogs* contains 2 morphemes:
 - 1 *dog* 'quadruped of the genus *canis*'
 - 2 *-s* 'plural'
- **Note:** morphemes ≠ words
- A **word** is the smallest element that can occur in isolation.

How do we know words are divided into morphemes by speakers?

- New singulars
 - *indice, homo sapien*
- Overt marking of morpheme boundaries
 - 's plural
- New formations using subparts of words
 - *Cheeseburger, rageahol*
- Productivity
 - *wugs*
- Speech errors
 - *have to went* for *had to go*
 - *have teachen* for *have taught*
- Contrary to the popular belief that all surface words are memorized



English morphemes

- **-gate:**
 - Watergate, Fornigate
- **-head:**
 - pothead, metalhead, techhead, gearhead, theoryhead, crackhead, hockey head (cheesehead is different)
- **Mc-:**
 - McMansion
- meaning of morphemes is not always transparent:
 - **-ass**
 - **hopefully**



Some types of word formation

- **Affixation**
 - Prefix (*un-*)
 - Suffix (*-ish*)
 - Infix:
 - *fucking, -iz-, -iznV-* (shiznit), *-m-* (Homeric infixation)
- **Truncations...**
- **Blends...**

Truncations

- normal pattern:
 - Catherine → Cath, Cathy
 - Lester → Les, not *Lest (cf. frus)
- subtleties:
 - Montgomery → Monty not *Montgy
 - Victoria → Vicky, not *Vicky
 - streptococcus → strep (*strept)

Blends

- 2 parts:
 - himbo, manthrax
 - cankle (Shallow Hal)
 - flabalanche (Hans and Franz)
 - egotistical
 - sexile
 - procrasturbate
- 3 parts:
 - Kentaco Hut
 - Texarkana



Morphological analysis

Western Armenian

Form	gloss
t ^h ot ^h oʃnerov	with the toads
gadunerun	of the cats
k ^h əɫɣargnerov	with the hats
madaninerəs	my rings
ink ^h nafarʒəs	my car

Morphological analysis

Persian

xaridam 'I bought'	naxaridim 'we did not buy'
xaridi 'you (sg.) bought'	mixarid 'he was buying'
xarid '(he) bought'	mixaridid 'you (pl) were buying'
naxaridam 'I did not buy'	namixaridand 'they were not buying'
xari 'you (sg) buy'	mixaram 'I am buying'

Morphological analysis

Michoacan Aztec

nokali 'my house'	mopelo 'your dog'
nokalimes 'my houses'	mopelomes 'your dogs'
mokali 'your house'	ipelo 'his dog'
ikali 'his house'	nokwahmili 'my cornfield'
kalimes 'houses'	mokwahmili 'your cornfield'
ikwahmili 'his cornfield'	