

Handout 2: Morphological analysis

1. Morpheme vs morph

- The **morpheme** is defined as the smallest meaningful unit in a language
- disagreement and/or inconsistency concerning the exact characterization
 - (i) a formal unit
 - (ii) an abstraction from the concrete forms
- the term ‘morph’ only refers to (i)

2. Morphological vs morphemic analysis

- the relation one morpheme = one morph doesn’t always hold (cf. Brinton 79-82):

(1) a. fish	1 morph <i>fish</i>	2 morphemes {FISH}+{pl}
b. cars	2 morphs <i>car+s</i>	2 morphemes {CAR}+{pl}
c. smaller	2 morphs <i>small+er</i>	2 morphemes {SMALL}+{compr}
d. better	1 morph <i>better</i>	2 morphemes {GOOD}+{compr}
e. worked	2 morphs <i>work+ed</i>	2 morphemes {WORK}+{past}
f. we	1 morph <i>we</i>	3 morphemes {1 st p}+{sg}+{m}+{obj}

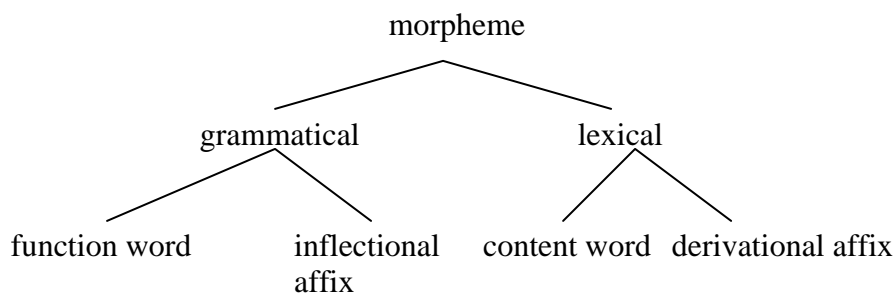
Exercise 1: Give morphological and morphemic analyses of the type in (1) for the following words: *mice, considered, worse, you, best, helplessly, went.*

- we speak of **zero morphs** if a given morpheme has no concrete phonetic realization
- we speak of **portmanteau morph(eme)s** if two or more morphemes are expressed by a single morph (e.g. *-s* on verbs expresses both present tense, third person, and singular)

Exercise 2: Is the word form *oxen* an example of two morphemes being realized by one morph? Give arguments for and against such a statement!

3. Types of morpheme

NB: As with words and phonemes ‘morpheme’ can refer to both types and tokens



- See Handout 1 for differences between inflection and derivation
- Roughly, inflection produces word forms and derivation (as other types of word formation) produces new lexemes

