LING 329 : MORPHOLOGY

TTh 1:10–2:30 PM, Eliot 121

Course Syllabus
Spring 2015

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Office hrs: Mon 1:30–3:00, Thu 3:30–5:00, or by appointment

PREREQUISITES
Successful completion of LING 211 Introduction to Linguistic Analysis (or equivalent), or consent of the instructor. Courses such as LING 321 Phonology, LING 323 Introductory Syntax, and LING 328 Morphosyntactic Typology are recommended, but by no means required.

FOCUS OF THE COURSE
Morphology is the branch of linguistics which deals with the internal structure of words and how they are formed. Morphologists seek to determine what kinds of knowledge speakers of a language need to have in order to use words and have intuitions about them. Since words (or their subparts) are stored in the speaker’s mental lexicon, morphology is also the study of the lexicon and how it is organized. The morphological component of grammar is often characterized as a list of morphemes (roots, affixes, etc.) together with a set of rules for combining morphemes to form words. However, ‘morpheme’ is in some ways a problematic concept, and some morphologists have proposed theories of word structure which dispense with morphemes altogether.

Some of the major theoretical questions we will be addressing in this course include the following:

1. What is a word? Is ‘word’ a coherent notion, and if so, how can it be defined? What is the status of words within the speaker’s mental grammar?

2. Are complex words formed by combining atomic units (morphemes) into hierarchical structures, or by applying functions (word formation rules, or WFRs) which map one word or stem to another? What does our theory of word building tell us about the content and organization of the lexicon?

3. Where does morphology ‘live’ in the grammar? Languages clearly have phonological principles (rules governing the combining of features into segments, segments into syllables, etc.), as well as syntactic principles (rules governing the combining of words into larger constituents). But are there independent principles of morphology—and hence a separate morphology module in the grammar? Or do generalizations about words and the structure of the lexicon reduce to principles of phonology and syntax?
Words exist at the interface between form and meaning. They count both as syntactic units which play a role in phrase structure, and as phonological units within a hierarchy of prosodic domains. We will therefore be particularly concerned with how the study of word structure interfaces with the study of sound structure and the study of sentence structure.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS, POLICIES, DEADLINES

Students will be expected to attend class, participate actively in discussion, complete all reading assignments (and post questions or comments on the readings to Moodle when requested), and complete all written work by the assigned due dates. The written work will consist of six problem sets and a final exam. The problem sets will count for approximately 60% of the course grade, while participation and the exam will count for about 20% each.

Problem Sets — Dates when assignments will be handed out and collected are given in the table below (these dates are subject to change). Problem sets will be handed out in class and posted for download from the course Moodle page. You are encouraged to work on problem sets together, so long as you write up your answers in your own words (copying must be treated as academic dishonesty and a violation of the Honor Principle). You are also more than welcome to consult with me prior to the due date of an assignment if you need extra help.

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<tr>
<th>Problem Set</th>
<th>Handed Out</th>
<th>Due In Class</th>
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<tr>
<td>PS 1</td>
<td>29 January</td>
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<td>PS 2</td>
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<td>PS 6</td>
<td>16 April</td>
<td>30 April</td>
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Assignments are due at the beginning of class. Papers must be typed, although trees and special symbols may be drawn in by hand. I prefer to receive assignments in hard copy form, but in cases where this is impossible (due to illness, last-minute printer failure, etc.), you may send me your assignment as an email attachment (PDF preferred) prior to the beginning of class. Written work must be turned in on time if you wish to receive full credit. Extensions can be negotiated under certain circumstances, such as illness or family emergency. Unexcused late work will be penalized 10% of total possible points for each full day it is late. A late assignment will not be accepted for credit if it is turned in after that assignment has been returned with comments.

Final Exam — The final exam will be an untimed take-home exam, and you will be given approximately a week to work on it. The exam will be handed out towards the end of reading week and due towards the end of finals week (exact dates TBD). The format for the exam will be similar to that of the problem sets, except of course that you will have to work on the exam individually rather than in groups.

COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS

Below I give a numbered list of the reading assignments for this course (subject to change). These readings are grouped into three broad units, and listed in the order in which you should complete
them. You will notice that I have not included specific dates for reading assignments: it makes
more sense to me to set the pace of the course as we go along. I will let you know in class which
reading assignment(s) you should be working on for the next week or two of the class.

Note that there is no required textbook for this course. Instead, we will be reading selections
from a number of different textbooks, as well as primary source readings (journal articles, chapters
from monographs, etc.). All readings are available on print reserve, through the course Moodle
page, as e-books available for download from the Library website, or more than one of the above.
For books available on print reserve, I give the call number between angled brackets. “E-book”
indicates that a book is available electronically.

A. Overview of the phenomena

Lexeme versus word-form, inflection and derivation. Morphemes: root, stem/base, and affix. Types
of morphological operations: concatenative, non-concatenative, suppletive. Doing basic morpholog-
ical analysis, position classes and blocking. Problems with the morpheme: unit-based (item-and-
arrangement) versus rule-based (item-and-process) approaches. The nature of the lexicon.

1. Haspelmath & Sims, Understanding Morphology (2nd edition), chapter 1 ‘Introduction’
   (sections 1.1–1.3), pp. 1–9; chapter 2 ‘Basic concepts’ (sections 2.1–2.3), pp. 14–27; chapter

2. Spencer, Morphological Theory, chapter 1 ‘The domain of morphology’ (sections 1.1–1.3),

   7–25 [skim to review]. <P126.K76 2005>

4. Haspelmath & Sims, Understanding Morphology (2nd edition), chapter 3 ‘Rules’ (section

5. Anderson, A-Morphous Morphology, chapter 3 ‘Is morphology really about morphemes?’,

B. Morphology meets phonology: Allomorphy and interactions

Basic morphological analysis: morphemes and allomorphs. Automatic alternations: underlying
representations and surface forms. Factors conditioning morpho-phonological allomorphy: lexical,
morphological, phonological. Problematizing the morphology-phonology interface: affix types and
level ordering. Reduplication and non-concatenative processes: tonal and templatic morphology.
Autosegmental phonology. Moras, syllables, and feet; prosodic morphology and circumscription
(Zec, Kager, McCarthy and Prince). Alignment constraints and morpheme position (Ussishkin).


7. Haspelmath & Sims, Understanding Morphology (2nd edition), chapter 2 ‘Basic concepts’
   (section 2.3), pp. 22–26 [skim to review]; chapter 10 ‘Morphophonology’ (sections 10.1–10.3),

8. Carstairs-McCarthy, ‘Phonological constraints on morphological rules’, chapter 7 of The
C. Morphology meets syntax: Words as units and the nature of the lexicon


