

Some useful terms for morphology I

morpheme the smallest unit in language that carries a particular meaning
examples of morphemes: cat, play, basil, Joe, stereo, hurricane, -ed, un-, -ly, -able, ...

free morpheme a morpheme that is also a word
free morphemes (of the ones above): cat, play, basil, Joe, stereo, hurricane

bound morpheme a morpheme that has to attach to
bound morphemes (of the ones above): -ed, un-, -ly, -able

Words can either consist of one morpheme (*mono-morphemic words, morphologically simple words*), or of several morphemes (*poly-morphemic words, morphologically complex words*).

All free morphemes are morphologically simple, or mono-morphemic, words: play, happy, care, text, book, fire, house, cat, ...

Examples of morphologically complex, or poly-morphemic, words are: played, unhappiness, careful, happily, text book, house cat, ...

'play' one word, one morpheme
'played' one word, two morphemes (play + -ed)

allomorphs are different variants of the same morpheme
examples of allomorphs: a/an (indefinite article), -s/-z/-əz/-Ø (plural), ...

root the 'core' of the word, carrying a major part of the meaning

base the part of the word (one or more morphemes) that a particular affix attaches to; it's the base with respect to an affix

affix something that attaches to a base

suffix an affix that follows the root

prefix an affix that precedes the root

infix an affix that surfaces inside the root

