04 - Words and morphemes

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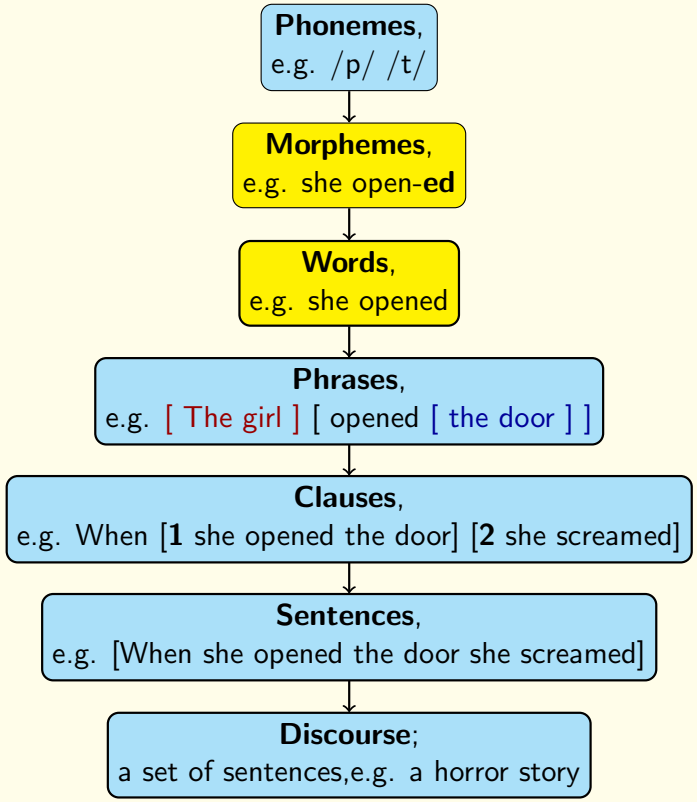
Language structure can be thought of as hierarchy;



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Words versus morphemes

WORD = Minimal Standalone Symbolic Unit (MiSS) (or smallest standalone unit of meaning)

MORPHEME = Minimal Symbolic Unit (MiS) (or smallest unit of meaning)

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Free versus **bound**

1. Jack **is** (really) try-**ing** to run fast-**er**

Bound morphemes

1. **Affixes** = **Prefixes**, **suffixes**
2. **infix**

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Bound morphemes

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Fan-bloody-tastic / abso-blooming-lutely

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Inflectional morphemes - minor modifications to a word's meaning

derivational - to derive a new word, either by substantially changing meaning or altering word class.

Morphologically **simple** versus **complex**.

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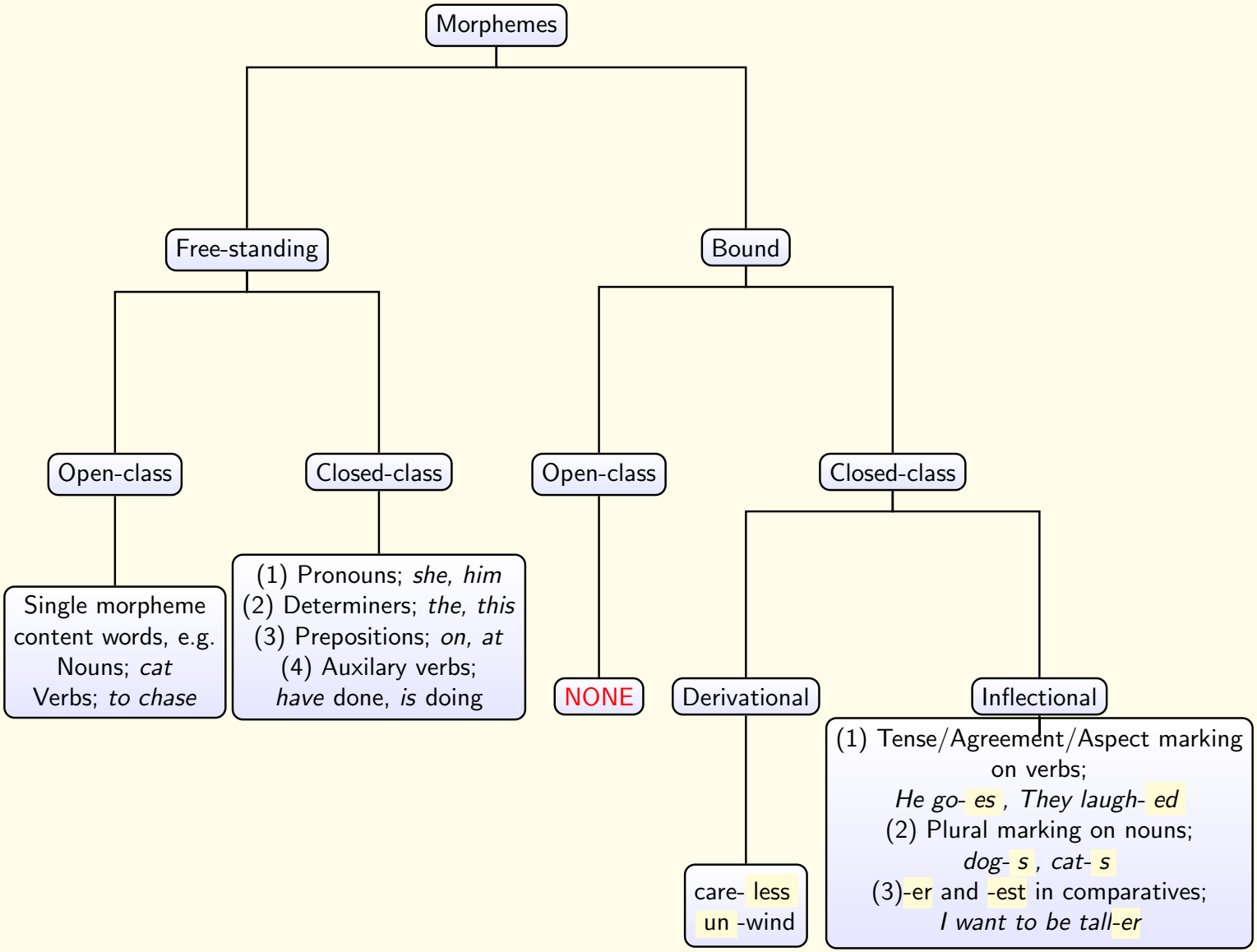

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Syntactic context EX.

2. Can you correct the following sentences? What is wrong with them?

1. He see the cat eats the food.
2. My house is big than yours.

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Syntactic context EX.

(1)	He	sees	the cat	eat	the food
	NP1	Inflected Verb	NP2	Uninflected Verb	NP3
(2)	My house	is	bigger	than	yours
	NP1	Verb *to be*	Adj-er	than	NP2

Phonological variability EX.

How does the pronunciation of the past tense vary across the following sentences?

1. He dropped the book
2. He turned the corner
3. She skidded on the mat

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Productivity EX.

4. What's the problem with the following sentences?

1. He is uneducated and untolerant
2. While Jack is a sporty person, Anna is more booky
3. While Mary embraced motherhood, she wasn't so keen on wifehood
4. Jane quickly realised the falseness of the information.

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Productivity EX.

1. While INFLECTIONAL morphemes are involved in syntactic processes, DERIVATIONAL morphemes are not.

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1. While INFLECTIONAL morphemes are involved in syntactic processes, DERIVATIONAL morphemes are not.
2. INFLECTIONAL morphemes participate in phonological processes to a greater extent than DERIVATIONAL morphemes

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3. While INFLECTIONAL morphemes are very productive (we can add them to many words), DERIVATIONAL morphemes are less productive.

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2. INFLECTIONAL morphemes participate in phonological processes to a greater extent than DERIVATIONAL morphemes
3. While INFLECTIONAL morphemes are very productive (we can add them to many words), DERIVATIONAL morphemes are less productive.
4. While DERIVATIONAL morphemes can come at the beginning and ends of words (prefixes and suffixes), INFLECTIONAL morphemes can only come at the end (suffix)

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Productivity EX.

1. Derivational morphemes are longer
2. Derivational morphemes have more specific meanings
3. Derivational morphemes are more language-specific

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1. Inflection (adding inflectional morphemes), e.g. laugh-ed
2. Derivation (adding derivational morphemes), e.g. un-do
3. Compounding (taking two words and "squishing" them together), e.g. fire man, book seller

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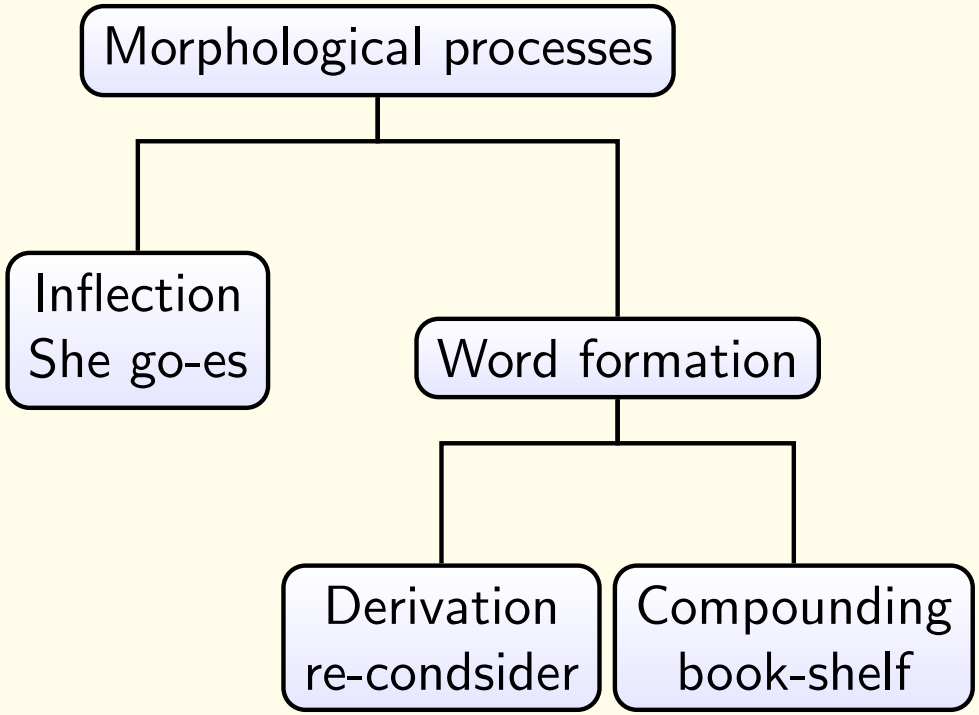
Figure: Morphological processes



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e.g. skypeable (derivation)

red jacket man/woman (a mysterious handsome stranger you see on the Metro every morning) (compounding)

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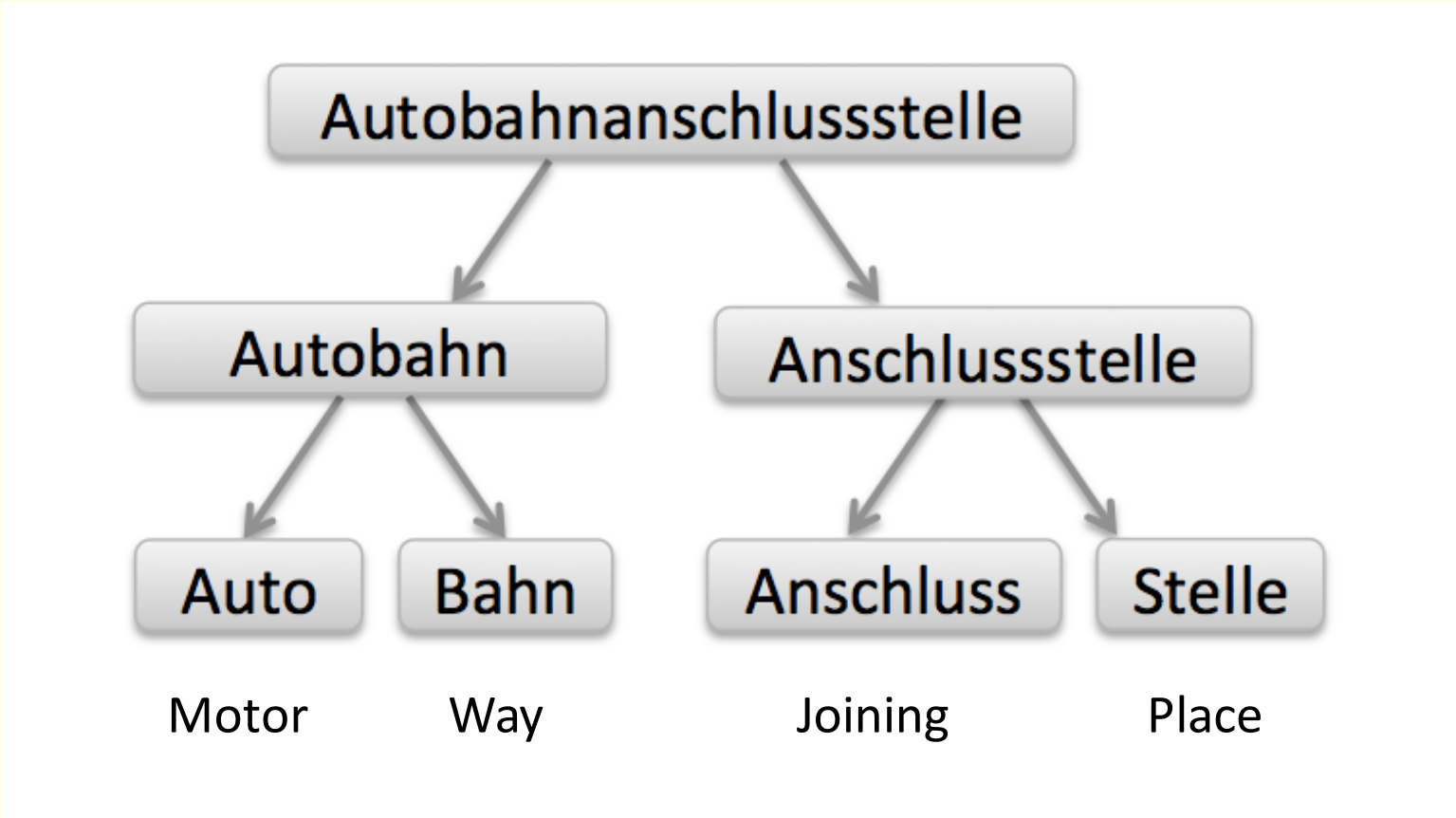

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un- mention -able -s

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un-	mention	-able	-s
un-	root	suffix	-s

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un-	mention	-able	-s
un-	root	suffix	-s
prefix	stem		-s

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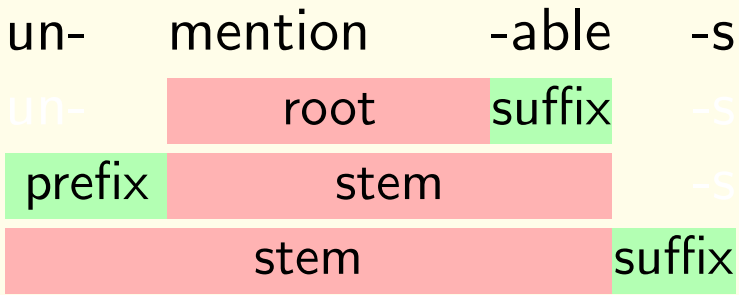

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Morphological abilities severely affected

Tense-marking difficulties in language-impaired children

Derivational morphology may be useful for building vocabulary

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Mean length of utterance (MLU)

Determines an individual's approximate language level

$$\frac{\text{Number of morphemes}}{\text{Number of utterances}}$$

Designed to measure an individual's **linguistic productivity**

"old macdonald had a farm"

"I've got this one and this one and this one and this one"

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We normally only count the morphemes which an individual is **using productively**.

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1. CHI: Let me play with it
2. CHI: The dinosaur swimmed across the lake
3. CHI: Then he tooked off hat
4. CHI: And then he put it in the Jam Jar

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1. CHI: Let me play with it = 5
2. CHI: The dinosaur swimm -ed across the lake = 7
3. CHI: Then he took -ed off hat = 6
4. CHI: And then he put it in the Jam Jar = 8

(5 + 7 + 6 + 8) / 4 = MLU (in morphemes) of 6.5

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Look at these examples. What does the suffix ‘mouth’ mean? How do you pronounce it in each word?

1. Portsmouth
2. Plymouth
3. Tynemouth
4. Grangemouth
5. Cockermouth

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