

English Morphology

In English morphology, we study the words, and their constituents: bases and affixes. Affixes may come at the beginning of the word, and in this case they are called *prefixes*.

If the affix comes in the middle of the word, it is called an infix. But if it comes at the end of the word, it is a *suffix*.

Suffixes are of two different types: inflectional and derivational. An inflectional suffix indicates the plural of nouns: books, dogs, houses.

A derivational suffix changes the class of the word, by changing the verb into a noun, as we have in govern (v) and government (n). In the same way, we have the word form (n.) and the word formal (adj.). So, the derivational suffix *-ment* changes the verb into a noun; the derivational suffix *-al* changes the noun form into the adjective form.

Thus morphology is the study of the shapes of words; so in a word we usually have more than one meaningful unit. Each unit is called a morpheme; so in the word *government*, we have two morphemes: the base govern, and the derivational morpheme *-ment* which changes the verb into a noun. Similarly, the word *formal* has two morphemes: the base form, and the derivational suffix *-al*, which changes the base into an adjective. Some words like *unfriendly* has three morphemes: the prefix *un-* meaning opposite, the base friend and the derivational suffix *-ly* making an adjective- Inflectional suffixes come last in the word: e.g. governments, where *-s* for the plural comes after the derivational suffix *-ment*.

Exercise I:

Indicate the prefixes in these words and give their meanings:

- | | |
|-----------|---------------|
| 1- return | 2- prepare |
| 3- unable | 4- impossible |
| 5- endear | 6- infamous |

7- prewar

8- submarine

9- intervene

10- inspect

Exercise 2:

Why are the following suffixes called derivational?

1-famous

2- falsify

3- friendship

4- frighten

5- portable

6- speaker

7- rainy

8- movement

9- writer

10- lately

Exercise 3:

What do the infixes indicate in these words?

1- Foot → feet [u] → [iy]

2- Shake → shook [ey] → [u]

3- Spin → spun [i] → [ə]

4- Tear → tore [ea] → [ɔə]

5- Ride → rode [ay] → [ow]

Exercise 4:

Indicate the meaning of infixes in these Arabic words:

1- Katab kitāb [a-a] → [i-ā]

2- Kitāb kutub [i-ā] → [u-u]

3- Kātīb kuttāb [ā-i] → [u-t-ā]

4- ṭalab ṭālib /a-`a/ → [ā-i]

5- ḥāsib hisāb [ā-i] → [i-ā]

Exercise 5:

Show whether the suffixes are inflectional or derivational in these words:

Realize- agreeable- stimulate- falsity- famous – colder- lived-
reader- ripen- books- shrinks- fixed- sooner- happier- realism-
waived- waited.

Inflectional Suffixes

(1) Plural Nouns

Nouns	Singular	Plural
1- duck	/dək/	Ducks /dəks/ /-s/
2- dog	/dɒg/	dogs /dɒgz/ /-z/
3- box	/bɒks/	Boxes /bɒksɪz/ /-ɪz/ = /-əz/

- 1- The noun: **duck** ends in /-k/, a voiceless consonant, so the plural noun ends in the suffix /-s/, which is similar to /-k/, (which is also voiceless (unvoiced): /dəks/. The rule here is called assimilation مشابهة.
- 2- The noun: **dog** ends in /-g/, a voiced consonant, so the plural noun ends in the suffix /-z/, which is similar to /-g/, which is also voiced. So here we have also assimilation /-dɒgz/
- 3- The noun: **box** ends in /-ks/. If we add /-s/, or /-z/, the word cannot be easily pronounced. So the suffix is /-ɪz/. So the plural suffix in /bɒksɪz/ is /-ɪz/. If we add here the suffix /-s/ or /-z/, there would be gemination and English has no gemination تشديد.

So, the inflectional suffix is /~ɪz/ = /-əz/ for ease of pronunciation.

(2) Verbs

(a) Present tense

He walks [~s] = [wɔ:ks]

He see[~z] = [siyz]

He watches [əz] = [~ɪz] = [wɔtʃɪz].

Here again the rule of assimilation tells us that the verb *walk* ends with the voiceless [k], so the inflectional suffix is pronounced [-s], but in the verb *see*, the last sound is a vowel, and, since vowels are voiced, then the suffix is [~z]. The verb

watches ends in [tʃ=t], and so the inflectional suffix is /-əz/ or /-ɪz/ for ease of pronunciation.

(Two) Past tense and past participle

- 1- They walked /-t/ /wɔ:kt/
- 2- They moved /-d/ /muwvd/
- 3- They added /-ɪd/ /ædɪd/

Here the same rule of assimilation applies, and so the inflectional suffix *-ed* in *walked* is pronounced /-t/ *walked* and /-d/ in *moved*; but in *added*, it is pronounced /ɪd/, since assimilation here would end with the doubling of the final consonant. This doubling called gemination is not found in English, although it is very common in Arabic.

Even when we have a doubled letter in English, it is pronounced as only one consonant, for example.

Announce /ənawns/ *arrive* /ərayv/ *allow* /ələw/ *running* /rənɪŋ/, *swimming* /swɪmɪŋ/.

But in Arabic we have:

/ʃamaʕa/ He gathered. /ʃammaʕa/ He collected /ʕalɪma/ He knew /ʕallama/ He taught.

(3) Adjectives

The inflectional suffixes that come with adjectives are: *-er*, *-est*

high higher [ər] a comparative suffix

high highest /əst/ a superlative suffix

Other examples:

Deep deeper deepest

Clean cleaner cleanest