

Practice With Terminology

A paradigm for the lexeme FRAGEN appears above. Here are some related items:

(ich) <i>frage</i>	‘(I) ask, (I) am asking’
(sie) <i>fragten</i>	‘(they) asked’
<i>Frage</i>	‘(a) question’
<i>Fragen</i>	‘questions’
<i>fraglich</i>	‘questionable’
<i>unfraglich</i>	‘unquestionable’
<i>fraglicher</i>	‘more questionable’
<i>fragliche</i>	‘questionable (fem.sing.)’, as in <i>fragliche Sache</i> ‘matter in question’ ¹
<i>fraglichere</i>	‘more questionable (fem.sing.)’

Using the terminology on the preceding pages...

(1) What would we call these words, taken as a group?

word family or **lexeme family**: For the most part these would be separate “dictionary words” or **lexemes**, though some, like *Frage/Fragen* are different **word-forms** of the same **lexeme**.

(2) What are the different **lexemes** represented by these words?

FRAGEN (verb) ‘to ask’: This is the form of the infinitive, which is the standard **citation form** for verbs. In general, for regular verbs like ‘ask’, the **word-forms** like those meaning ‘I ask’, ‘they ask’, and dozens of others can be predicted from the infinitive, though, like many (probably most) languages, German has lots of irregular verbs, for which a dictionary would include information in addition to the infinitive.

FRAGE (noun) ‘question’: This is the form of the nominative singular, which is the standard **citation form** for nouns. Nouns have additional **word-forms** in German, including plurals, such as *Fragen* and forms marked for case (see a couple below for the adjectives).

FRAGLICH (adjective) ‘questionable’: This is the uninflected form of the adjective, derived with the ending *-lich*. It is a separate **lexeme** from those above since it belongs to a different category (adjective) and has certain unpredictable features. For example, not all roots would permit formation of adjectives using this ending, in contrast to the **word-forms** illustrated with the verb (*fragen*) and the noun (*Frage*), where, for example, every verb would have comparable word forms showing person agreement and tense.

UNFRAGLICH (adjective) ‘unquestionable’: Although negative adjectives derived with the prefix *un-* are quite regular and predictable, we would consider this a separate **lexeme**, NOT a **word-form** of the adjectival lexeme FRAGLICH. *Fraglich* and *unfraglich* express different concepts, unlike *frage* ‘I ask’ and *fragten* ‘they asked’, where the same basic concept of “asking” is involved but things external to that concept require additional morphology.

The last three items, *fraglicher*, *fragliche*, *fraglichere* would not be separate **lexemes**, but rather **word-forms** of the lexeme *fraglich*. As with the verbal word forms, these three items have morphology that German grammar requires because of factors external to the

¹ When used as direct modifiers of nouns, German adjectives are marked to agree with the nouns they modify in gender, number, and case. When used as predicate adjectives, however, adjectives are unmarked. Compare the sentence *diese Sache ist fraglich* ‘this matter is questionable’ with the example phrase.

base meaning of the word, such as the fact that the adjective modifies a feminine noun or is being used to compare things.

(3) Identify the following morphological elements in these words:

- root: *frag*
- affix: (verb) *-e* ‘1st singular present’, *-te-n* ‘past + plural subject’
(noun) *-en* ‘plural’ (actually, nominative and accusative plural—endings change depending on the syntactic situation)
(adjective—**lexeme** forming affixes) *-lich* ‘adjective’; *un-* ‘negative’
(adjective—**word-form** affixes) *-er* ‘comparative’; *-e* ‘nominative and accusative feminine singular’
- base: (noun and verb) **root = base**
fraglich: **root = base**
fragliche, fraglicher; unfraglich: **base = fraglich**
fraglichere: **base = fraglicher**
- stem: (noun and verb) **root = base = stem**
fraglich: This is the **stem** of *fragliche, fraglicher, and fraglichere*
By our definition of **stem**, *fraglich* would not be the **stem** of *unfraglich* because *un-* is not an “inflection”. If we had added *unfraglicher* ‘more unquestionable’ to our data, *unfraglich* would be the **stem** of of this word.

(4) What would be the likely citation form for ‘questionable’?

fraglich: This is a “sayable” form that has no predictably required affixes.