

## 2. SOME DEFINITIONS

### Some Definitions

word: Turns out to be hard to define

- *minimum free form* (Lieber, p. 3, “one or more morphemes that that can stand alone in a language”): are *the, and, my* words? are they “free”? and what are “morphemes”
- *items separated by spaces in writing*: works for written languages and shows that speakers have a sense of words, but it doesn’t always work out cleanly for languages that do not have a standardized written tradition and even some that do! How many words are in the following list? *wallpaper wall plug leapfrog leap year blacklist black belt*

I was going to give samples of weird word breaking or none at all from transcriptions in languages without standard writing systems, but all the examples I could find did a pretty good job of making rational word breaks!

- *non-separable linguistic units*

Q: [a blue-colored book]      What color is the book? A: Blue (colored).

Q: [a clueless student]      \*What less is the student? A: \*Clue.

Aronoff & Fudeman (2005) cite a song from the musical *Camelot*:

It’s May, it’s May, the month of “yes, you may,”

The time for every frivolous whim, proper or *im-*,

When all the world is brimming with fun, wholesome or *un-*

- *linguistic units that have internal integrity*

That’s not at all possible.

\*That’s *im-at all-possible*.

a very green lawn, a greener lawn

\*a very greenhouse, \*a green-er-house

Does the existence of *fan-f...in’-tastic* show that *fantastic* is not a word?

lexeme: - Lieber—“...[a family] of words that differ only in their grammatical endings or grammatical forms”

Haspelmath—“a ‘dictionary word’ ...an abstract entity that can be thought of as a set of word forms”

- Katamba—“abstract base for forms of the same word”

- Aronoff & Fudeman—“...a word with a specific sound and a specific meaning [whose] shape may vary depending on syntactic context.”

- Hayes—“an inflectable stem”

word-form: - Haspelmath—a “text word”, i.e. a concrete entity that “can be pronounced and used in texts—every word-form belongs to one lexeme”

- Katamba—“a particular physical realisation of [a lexeme] in speech or writing”

*sing, sings, singing, sang, sung* are the word-forms that belong to the lexeme SING

citation form: a form of a lexeme chosen by convention as the name of the lexeme (for languages with published dictionaries, normally the head word for a dictionary entry)

SING is a lexeme whose citation form is “sing” and which is realized by the word-forms *sing, sings, singing, sang, sung*

paradigm: - Haspelmath and Aronoff & Fudeman—“the set of all the inflected forms that a lexeme assumes”

- Hayes—adds that the word-forms in a paradigm are “arranged according to the categories defined by the [system of inflectional features]”

German FRAGEN (citation form = *fragen* ‘to ask’)

TENSE: present		NUMBER: sing.		NUMBER: plural
PERSON: 1	ich	<b>frage</b>	wir	<b>fragen</b>
PERSON: 2	du	<b>fragst</b>	ihr	<b>fragt</b>
PERSON: 3	er/sie/es	<b>fragt</b>	sie	<b>fragen</b>

TENSE: preterite		NUMBER: sing.		NUMBER: plural
PERSON: 1	ich	<b>fragte</b>	wir	<b>fragten</b>
PERSON: 2	du	<b>fragtest</b>	ihr	<b>fragtet</b>
PERSON: 3	er/si/es	<b>fragte</b>	sie	<b>fragten</b>

word family (= lexeme family): [not an “official” piece of terminology, but useful] a set of related lexemes

the word family of the lexeme SING includes also the lexemes RESING, SONG, SINGER, SINGABLE, UNSINGABLE, UNSUNG and, more marginally, SING-ALONG, SING-SONG, SONGFEST

morpheme: the smallest unit of meaning that cannot be further subdivided into meaningful units

*undernourished* comprises the morphemes *under* (“less than adequate”), *nourish* (“provide food”), *ed* (“in an affected state”); *unnourished* comprises the morphemes *un* (“not”) + the last two morphemes just mentioned. Although *under* includes the string of sounds *un* found in *unnourished*, our definition of “morpheme” does not allow us to divide *under* into two morphemes *un+der* because (i) the *un* of *under* does not provide the meaning “not” (or any other identifiable meaning), and (ii) *der* has no separate existence in any English lexeme. Parallel arguments can be applied in rejecting the *ish* of *nourish* as a separate morpheme even though it contains a substring of the phonemes found in *foolish*, which comprises the morphemes *fool* (“person without good sense”) and *ish* (“like a...”).

affix: a form attached to a base to form a new word-form (and potentially a new lexeme)

base: any form to which an affix is added (not everyone distinguishes base vs. stem, using “stem” in the sense of “base” as defined here)

stem: Haspelmath and Katamba—the base of an *inflected* word form

The lexeme SING includes the (unaffixed) stem (or base) *sing*, to which the affix *-s* can be added to form the word-form *sings*. To the same base can be added the affix

-er to form a new lexeme *singer*. The lexeme SINGER, in turn has the word-form *singer*, which can be the stem of the inflected form *singers* and the base of the derived form *non-singer*.

- root: - Katamba—the irreducible core of a word, present in all the manifestations of a lexeme  
- Haspelmath—“a base that cannot be analyzed any further into constituent morphemes” (roots and affixes are the primitive elements of morphology)

Deciding on what a root is will be language specific and time specific. There seems to be no problem in recognizing two roots in *cat's-eye* referring to a type of precious stone, but *daisy* would be a root for all English speakers today, even though historically it is from *day's eye*. *Hippopotamus* is a root in English even though it comprises two roots in Greek (*hippo-* and *pot-*). The fact that we can call this animal a *hippo* does not mean that /hippo/ is the “root” in English. Clearly, English *hippo* is created by shorting a long word even though, more or less by accident, the form corresponds to a root in the Greek original.

### 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' <sup>1</sup>
<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?
- (2) What are the different lexemes represented by these words?
- (3) Identify the following morphological elements in these words:
  - root
  - affix
  - base
  - stem
- (4) What would be the likely citation form for 'questionable'?

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<sup>1</sup> 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.