

Handout 6

Chapter 4 Katamba

Open endedness of Lexicon

Speakers of language understand not only the real words but also the potential words

Morphology has to account for both the structure of the existing words as well as neologisms

The upshot is morphology is productive.

Virtually no limit for potential words

Productivity

Productivity is seen in terms of generality

The more general a word formation process is the productive it will be

Productivity is matter of degree

Some processes are more general than others

Suffix *s/z/az* is more productive than *-ves*

Exercise

Study the following data.

[4.1]	chartist	morbid	worker
	communist	tepid	painter
	racist	timid	swimmer
	pianist	splendid	dancer
	anarchist	horrid	jogger

- (i) Divide the above words into their constituent morphs.
- (ii) List all the suffixes.
- (iii) State the meaning of the morphemes represented in the data.
- (iv) Find five more words that are formed using each of the suffixes that you have identified.
- (v) State the word-class of the base to which each suffix is added.
- (vi) To what class does the resulting new word belong?

Semi productivity

Some linguists consider semi productivity to accommodate idiosyncratic affix.

The suffix *-ant* turns a verbal base into an agentive nominal *assailant, entrant, claimant & dependant*.

It attaches to Latinate bases only

Productivity and creativity

Productivity has been referred to creativity on several occasions. This indicates the capacity of all human languages to use finite means to produce an infinite number of words and utterances

Consider

Stool pigeon (police informer)

Redlegs (poor whites in Tobago)

Deadline

No synchronic rule formation can be given.

Blocking

It may be due to the prior existence of another word with the meaning that the putative word would have (Aronoff 1976).

Thief ... but no *stealer from steal

When there are two semantically similar morphemes one of which is more productive than the other, the more productive morpheme is less susceptible to blocking than its less counter part. Ex suffix *ity* and *ness*, Aronoff shows that *-ness* is more productive in English than the other. He shows nouns that are formed by adding *ous* to an adjectival base can take *ness* to create another noun while *-ity* in such cases would crash!

Glorious gloriosity

Blocking involves two expressions, one potential and one actual. We say that a potential expression is prevented from occurring because another expression with the same meaning and function already exists.

In the context of inflection, forms like *childs, *oxes, *mouses, and *foots are blocked by the exist-ence of children, oxen, mice, and feet.

irregular inflectional morphology, we can say that the irregular forms block the application of the regular, or default, rule. This has been formally articulated in work on Lexical Phonology (Kiparsky 1982) and is related to the Elsewhere Condition, which states that a more specific rule or process applies before a more general rule.

The Elsewhere Condition is important in many areas of morphology, not just productivity. For example, we can hypothesize that in the creation of the plural form children from child, the more specific rule, which we can state as “add the suffix [r en] and change the vowel of the root to [i],” applies before the more general pluralization rule, “add /z/.

Blocking of derivational formations.

Existence of the verb *mail* prevents speakers from using a zero-derived verb *mailbox ‘to put a letter or package in a mail-box in order to send it to a recipient’.

There is no *cutter* in the sense of ‘piece of silverware used for cutting because there is a word called *knife*, and there are wood *cutter* and *cutters* in other sense

Blocking is an economy principle that can be thought of informally as an injunction to avoid coining synonyms.

Avoidance of creating synonyms comes from syntax,

Why, for example, do we say this morning, this afternoon, this evening, but not *this night because we have tonight.

Blocking does not constrain forming words,

Word may be blocked in one sense but not in another. And indeed, this night is acceptable when it has a different sense from the blocked one, as in the phrase “Why is this night different from all other nights?”

Blocking at phonological level

Sigel and Halle 73 observe that monosyllabic base that end in an obstruents can be derived as verbs by suffixing –en to the adjectives

Dark-en, black-en , *dry-en

Morphological

Velar softening to romance roots

Cynic cynicism

Critic – criticism

But not blake *blakism

Semantic factors

Inalienable possession

Obligatorily possessed by the head noun it modifies

Blue eyed boy

*two carred family

Marked and Unmarked

Generally if there are polar semantic items we tend to use the positive one as unmarked to usual in comparison to negative one which is marked

Unwell	unill
Unlived	unhated
Unhappy	unsad