Class – U.G. Sem IV

Paper : MJC 6 (English)

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Morphemes, as defined earlier, are the minimum grammatical forms of a language. Some of them can occur alone, others can not. Forms which do not occur alone are bound morphemes, and those which occur alone are free morphemes. Rat, cat, go, black, the, yet, but and are free morphemes. Affixes to the words such as –ness, -less, pre, up-, de-, con-, -er, -ment are all bound morphemes.

Roots and Affixes

The root morpheme is that part of the word which is left when all the affixes have been removed. Root morphemes may be bound or free, and are potentially unlimited in language, because languages go on creating new words or borrowing 'loan words' from other languages. It is the nucleus of a word containing in it the principal meaning.

Affixes are of three kinds – **prefix, infix, and suffix**. In the English words such as receive, remove, deceive, perform, unfaithful, unemployment, re-, de-, per-, un-, are all prefixes. The Prefixes are affixed before the roots and can not occur independently; they are bound morphemes. Infixes are less commonly found in English apart from one mode of analysis of plurals like geese, men. Infixes are found in Cambodian, in Sudanese and in Sanskrit too.

Suffixes are bound morphemes that occur in the end of a base eg 'seated' , and 'linkage' etc. The plural formative –s, -en, ; the verb paradugn affixes –ing, -d, -ed,etc the comparative and superlative ending of an adjectives (-er, and –est) and so many other final position formatives such as –ness, -less,-ment are called suffixes.

Inflectional and Derivational Suffixes :

Inflectional and Derivational are the sub categories of Suffixes. If one kind of suffix is affixed to a root we can not affix any other. Suffix e.g in 'agreed' and 'agrees' , -d and –s are suffixes and do not therefore allow any further affixation of a suffix. Such affixes which do not allow further affixation called inflections, or inflectional morphemes. The suffixes which may be followed by other suffixes are called derivational suffixes. For example , -ment, -ble are derivational suffixes in 'agreement' and 'agreeable' because both can be followed by other suffixes and can, for instance, become 'agreements' and 'agreeableness' after the addition of the suffix –s, and –ness in words.

Inflectional suffixes are 'terminal' and their termination never changes the class (part of speech) of the root, for example , in 'sweeter' and 'sweetest' , the termination of ' –er' by '-est' does not change the part of speech; both the forms remain adjectives. Some examples of inflectional suffixes are :

(i) Noun Plural   -s   Boys

(ii) Noun Possessive   's   Boy's

(iii) Verb third person singular (Present)   -s   Conducts

(iv) Verb present participle   -ing   conducting

(v) verb past tense   -ed   conducted

(vi) verb past participle   -en   Frozen

(vii) comparative   -er   Greater

(viii) Superlative   -est   Greatest

All the rest of the suffixes are derivational.

An Inflectional suffixes occur at the end position of a form. It is essentially terminal. Where as a derivational suffix is not essentially terminal. Derivational suffixes can occur medially and /or finally, but inflectional suffixes occur only finally.

Derivational Suffixes can be sub classified into two types :

(1) Class maintaining derivational suffix

(2) Class changing derivational suffix

The class maintaining suffix are those which produce a derived form of same class as the underlying form ; they donot change the class of a part of speech. In 'boyhood' , 'kinship' , 'childhood, principalship, the suffix '–hood' and '-ship' are class maintaining suffix. The class changing derivations are those that produce a derived form of another class. Eg in 'Teacher' , 'boyish' development' the suffix '-er' , '-ish' , '-ment' are class changing suffix. In 'teacher' a verb 'teach' has become a noun after suffixing the '-er'. In 'boyish' a noun 'boy' has become an adjective after suffixing the '-ish'

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