

3. Roots and Affixes

The Structure of Words (Ling 350)

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What We'll Cover

1. Quiz #2
2. Roots and affixes
3. For next time

Quiz #2

1. From last week:
What is a lexical item?
2. From the reading:
What does it mean for a morpheme to be bound? Give an example of a bound morpheme.

Morphemes

- Words with predictable meanings (like *dioeciously*) are “composed of identifiable **smaller parts** [...] put together in a systematic fashion so that the meaning of the whole word can be reliably determined” (p.16).
- These smaller parts are called **morphemes**.

un-Trumpian

homelessness

rapidity

giraffe

- Each word contains at least one morpheme. Words with only one morpheme are **monomorphemic**. Words with 2 or more are **polymorphemic**.

Morphemes

- Morphemes must:
 1. Be identifiable from one word to another, and
 2. Contribute in some way to the meaning of the whole word.
- Do *cat*, *cataract*, *catastrophe*, and *scatter* all have the same morpheme, *cat*?
- Do *dog*, *doghouse*, *dogs*, and *doggy* all have the same morpheme, *dog*?
- Not all recurring word-parts are morphemes. They must have some consistency of meaning. (But points 1 and 2 above are less tightly linked than they may seem.)



Morphemic Structure

- The morphological structure of words is largely independent of their phonological (i.e. sound) structure.
- You can have words with multiple syllables and only one morpheme (like *cataract*), as well as words with a single syllable and multiple morphemes (like *dogs*).

Free and Bound Morphemes

- What does it mean for a morpheme to be free?
- What does it mean for a morpheme to be bound?
- How many morphemes are in the following words? Which are free? Which are bound?

Don't get too hung up on spelling.

un-Trumpian

rapidity

punishment

happy

happily

kindness

foxes

- Which morphemes seem to be at the core (or root) of these words?

Free and Bound Morphemes

Do you see any patterns in these words?

(1) a. read-able
hear-ing
en-large
perform-ance
white-ness
dark-en
seek-er

free + bound

native Germanic words

b. leg-ible
audi-ence
magn-ify
rend-ition
clar-ity
obfusc-ate
applic-ant

bound + bound

borrowed Latinate words



cranberries

What is a “cranberry morpheme”?

- “Cranberry morphemes” demonstrate that a morpheme may have little to no meaning on its own, but may contribute meaning to a word such that it is distinguished from other words.
- They also show that it is possible for a morpheme to appear in only a single word.



Activity

- In groups, answer question 1.
- Now answer question 2.
- And now 3.

Affixes

- What is a prefix?
- What is a suffix?
- Which are there more of in English?
- What is an **affix**?
- All affixes are bound. Only root morphemes can be free.

believable

helpful

The final morpheme in *believable*, *incredible* (pronounced “ubble”) is not the same as the free word *able*. It’s a suffix.

Ditto the *-ful* of *helpful*, *sinful*, etc.

Roots

- Only roots can be free – affixes can't.
- But are all roots free?
- What are some other words with the roots in (1)b?
- Most everyday English words do have free roots, but a good number of them have bound roots, esp. those from Latin.

(1)

a. read-able
hear-ing
en-large
perform-ance
white-ness
dark-en
seek-er

b. leg-ible
audi-ence
magn-ify
rend-ition
clar-ity
obfusc-ate
applic-ant

All the words in (1)b. have **bound roots**.

Roots

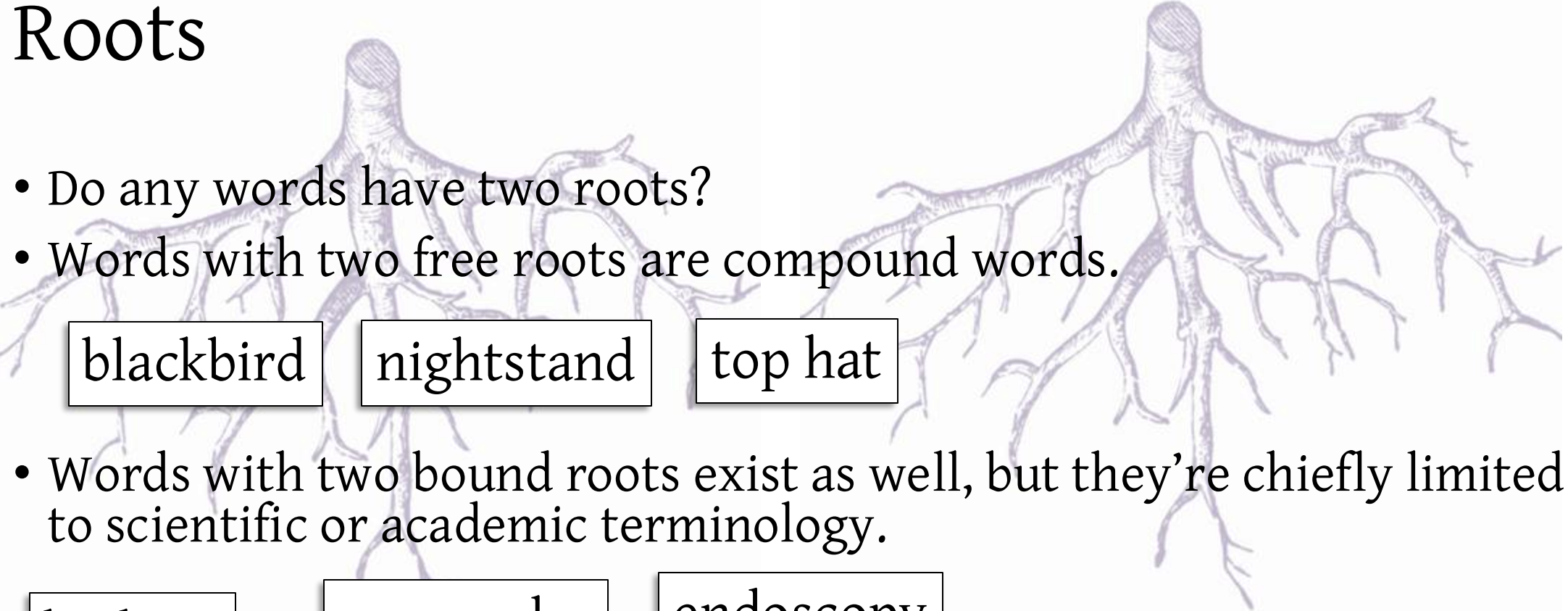
- What's the difference between these two series of words?

(a) all have bound roots

a) author
plumber
archer
carpenter
butcher
doctor
mayor

b) editor
painter
thinker
builder
farmer
actor
governor

Roots



- Do any words have two roots?
- Words with two free roots are compound words.

blackbird

nightstand

top hat

- Words with two bound roots exist as well, but they're chiefly limited to scientific or academic terminology.

biology

geography

endoscopy

- Bound roots can be liberated and become free words over time.

photo

retro

psycho

Allomorphy

- How are regular nouns in English pluralized?

–S

dogs, cats, houses

[ɪz]

This one shows up when the preceding sound is a sibilant, e.g. *horse, rose, bush, church, judge*

[s]

This one shows up when the preceding sound is voiceless (p, t, k, f, voiceless th)

[z]

This one shows up everywhere else

- This situation – a single morpheme having multiple possible realizations – is called **allomorphy**. –s is a suffix with three allomorphs.

Does the possessive –’s follow the same pattern?

Activity

- In groups, answer question 4.

Meaningless Morphemes

- The following words are verbs: reduce, deduce, induce
- How do you turn them into nouns? reduction, deduction, induction
- Since they undergo the same morphological process of $V \rightarrow N$ conversion, and since they all seem to contain prefixes that appear across a vast array of words, it seems like *-duce* is a root.
- But what does it mean?
- Can you think of any other apparently meaningless roots?
- All words with opaque roots like these are lexical items.

For next time

- Read chapter 4 in the textbook. There will be a quiz on this reading and on what we did today at the start of class.