

# 5. Derivation

The Structure of Words (Ling 350)

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# Quiz #4

1. What's one way that derivation differs from inflection?
2. What is an affix that allows you to derive a noun from another noun?

# What We'll Cover

1. Quiz #4
2. Derivation
3. For next time

# Inflection vs. Derivation

- Inflection—what we discussed last time—conveys grammatical information about a given lexeme. It does not create a new lexical item.

hope hopes hoped hoping

Inflection is always marked using suffixes in English.

- Derivation, on the other hand—the topic of this week’s reading—adds lexical meaning, not grammatical meaning. It does create a new lexeme.

hopeless hopeful

Derivation is *almost* always done using affixes in English, *usually* suffixes.

# Base

- A useful term introduced in this reading is **base**.
- A base is what a derivational affix is added to.
- What is the base in *helpful*?      help + ful
- What is the base in *helpfulness*?      helpful + ness
- Sometimes, a word's structure can be ambiguous.

undoable

able to be undone?

← undo + able

or unable to be done?

← un + doable

- What's the base here?
- What does *undoable* mean?

# Base

- But what about this word?

undefeatable

un + defeatable

undefeat + able

← Is “undefeat” a word?

- Is this ambiguous, too?
- Undefeatable is **not** ambiguous. It has only one meaning—‘unable to be defeated,’ not ‘able to be undefeated.’
- Now do question 1 on your sheets.



# Word Classes

- There are four word classes you need to be able to identify with no problem:
- **Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.**
- How can you tell what something's word class is?
- Don't depend upon semantics ('Nouns are people, places, or things!'). Use a morphosyntactic approach, like we talked about last time.
- Nouns can serve as subject of a sentence and they can usually be pluralized.
- Verbs can be put into past tense.
- Adjectives can come between "the" and a noun (which they modify), and can usually have "very" put before them.
- Adverbs modify verbs, which they can precede or follow, and can usually also have "very" put before them.

What's the word class for each of these words?

hopeful

befriend

octagon

hopefully

lunar

portray

adjustment

president

hatred

defy

vaccinate

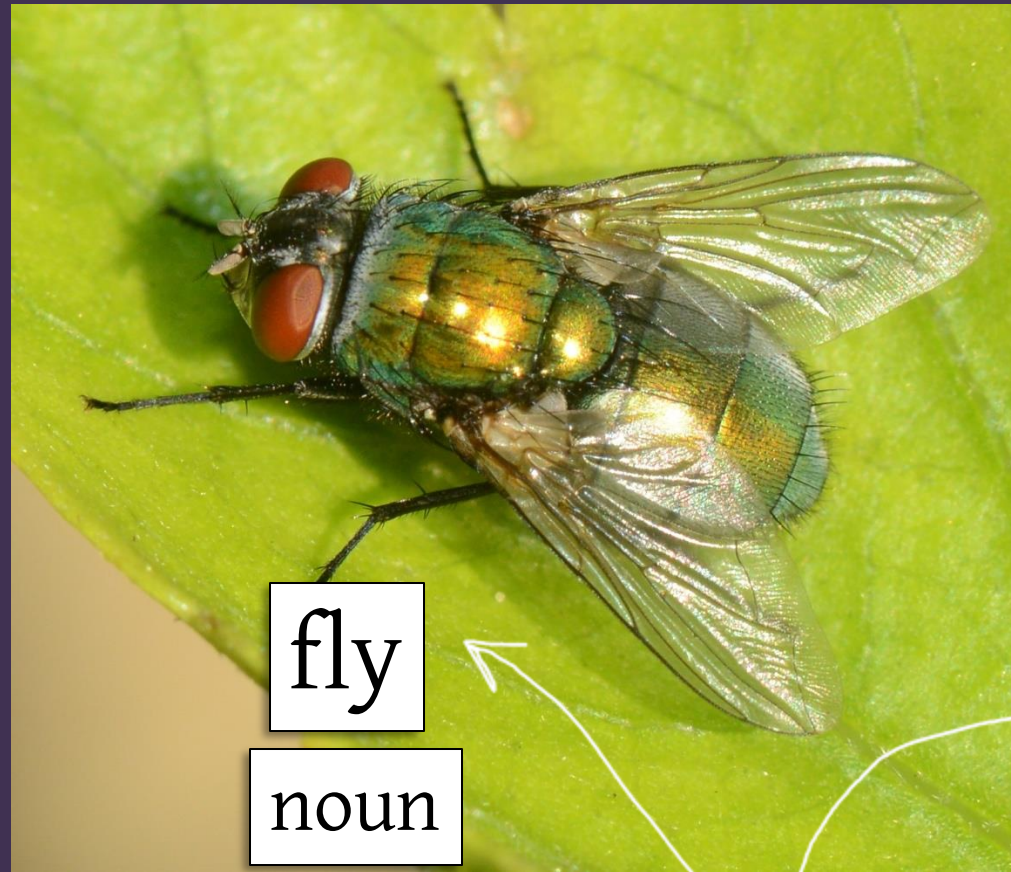
organization



cicada

noun

But what about in the sentence 'Cicadas can fly'?  
Is 'fly' a noun there, too?



fly

noun

fly

verb

Two different lexemes.

- In isolation, it can be impossible to identify the word class of a word.

fly

hand

taste

hate

love

red

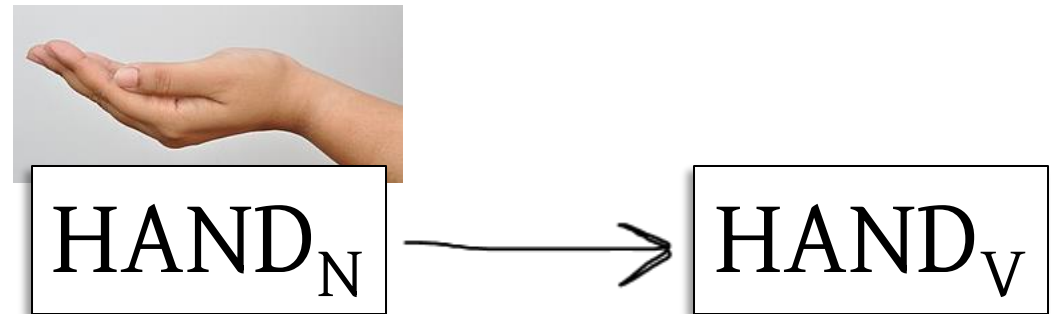
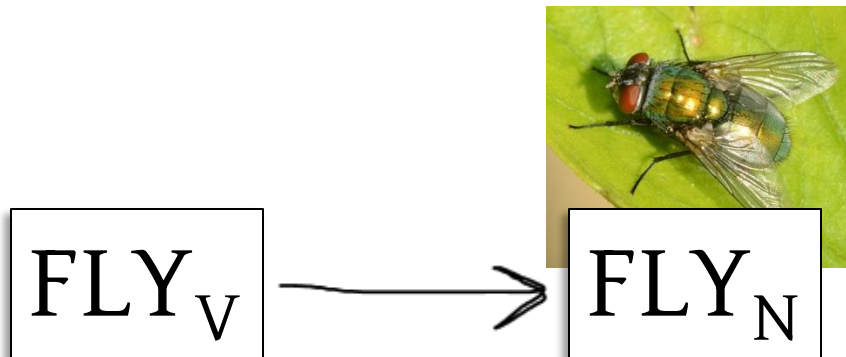
evil

call

- To decide upon the word class for any of these, you'd need to see them in the context of a sentence or with some inflectional morphology added.

# Lexemes and word classes

- Each lexeme may have only one word class.
- This means that there must be at least two different lexemes for FLY (and HAND, and LOVE, and TASTE, and EVIL, and...).
- **Conversion** is a derivational process that does not require the use of an affix. It allows us to make a new lexeme, on the base of a preexisting lexeme, with a different word class.



# Class-changing Derivation

- Derivation allows us to change the word class of a base, either through conversion or through affixation. (However, derivation doesn't *necessarily* change the word class of a base.)
- Inflection never changes the word class of a word.
- Derivation always creates a new lexeme. Inflection never does.

# Class-changing Derivation

- Class-changing affixes like to take bases of one or two word classes and regularly create new words of a particular word class.
- Take –ion for example. What word class(es) does it like to attach to?
- What are some bases that it can take?
- What is the word class of the words that it creates?
- Do questions 2 and 3 on your sheets.

-ion takes verb bases and creates nouns.

action  
possession  
communication  
collection

# Non-class-changing Derivation

- A number of derivational affixes do not change the word class of the bases to which they attach.
- Many of these (un-, in-, im-, de-...) involve negation.
- Do question 4 on your sheets.
- Now do question 5.
- Then 6.

# For next time

- Read Carstairs-McCarthy chapter 6. There will be a quiz on this reading at the start of class.