9. Productivity

The Structure of Words (Ling 350)

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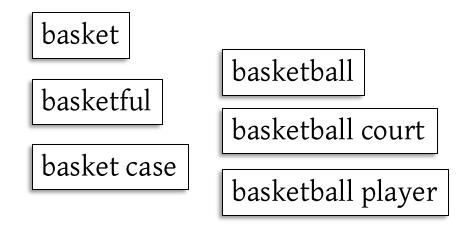
Fall 2025

Reading

- I can't emphasize enough how crucial it is that you actually read the entire chapter **before** coming to this class.
- You need to engage with the course content outside of class. We only meet once a week, and, apart from reading, there's no homework. You will forget a lot from week to week without some engagement.
- To succeed in this class, you need to **comprehend** what you read not just in the textbook, but in the slides as well. I saw a lot of attempts to copy down stuff from the slides but in a way that made no sense and showed a total lack of understanding.
- When you don't understand something, you have to ask about it.

Finishing up from last week

- Refresher on trees
- How would we draw trees for:





• Now let's do the final activity on the worksheet from last week.

Productivity

• What is productivity?

Formal Regularity

- In this context, what does "formal" mean?
- "Of a derivational process, the characteristic that the kind of base to which the process can apply can be relatively precisely specified. For example, the formation of verbs with the suffix -en is formally regular in that nearly all its bases are monosyllabic adjectives ending in obstruents (plosives and fricatives), e.g. tough, fat, damp." (106)
- Is *-ness* formally regular?
- What kinds of bases does it take?

"The suffix -ness is [...] formally regular, in the sense that one can specify what sort of structure an adjective must have in order to be a possible base for it – namely, any structure whatever. That is, whatever adjective -ness is attached to, the result sounds like a possible noun, even though it may not be one that is conventionally used (e.g. sensitiveness, pureness, longness)." (93)

Semantic Regularity

- What does "semantic" mean?
- "A derivational process is semantically regular if the contribution that it makes to the meaning of the lexemes produced by it is uniform and consistent." (95)
- Is the adverb-forming *-ly* semantically regular?
- What meaning does it add? | quickly, slowly, intelligently, hastily, shoddily, casually
- How about -able? Is that semantically regular?
- What meaning does it add in these words?

That is a <u>readable</u> book. That is a <u>punishable</u> offense. He is an <u>adorable</u> dog.

This water is not drinkable. This surface is <u>paintable</u>.

Formal and Semantic Regularity

- There can be a mismatch between these 2 types of regularity some affixes are formally regular and semantically irregular.
- We've established that *-able* is semantically irregular. Is it formally irregular as well?
- -able is formally regular. It can attach to basically any transitive verb.
- To evaluate this, it can be helpful to make a chart. What is a transitive verb?

	ion	-ment
admit	✓	X
commit		✓
permit		X
transmit		X
submit		X
emit		X

Now do activity 1 on this week's sheet.

First, let's evaluate the formal regularity of –ion.

Now, let's evaluate the formal regularity of *-ment*.

What's more formally regular: -ion or -ment?

For next time

- Reread section 8.6 "Measuring productivity: the significance of neologisms" (pp.102–105) as well as all of chapter 9. There will be a quiz on these readings at the start of next week's class.
- Come prepared to discuss.