

# Morpheme-based Versus Word-based Morphology

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The past thirty some years have seen the resurgence among linguists of a widespread and sustained interest in morphology. A variety of articles on morphology by itself or as it relates to other areas in the grammar are found in a good number of reputable journals. Likewise, many books have been published on this topic, conferences and yearbooks dedicated to morphology have become commonplace, and more recently, even a book series titled *Morphology: Critical Concepts in Linguistics* has been put out. In the bulk of literature that has emerged, various perspectives or approaches to the study of morphology are proposed.

In this paper, I will consider only two radically different theories, namely, Lexical Morphology (Lieber 1990, 1992; Di Sciullo and Williams 1987; Selkirk 1982) which is a morpheme-based type of morphology versus a word-based type presented in A-Morphous Morphology (Anderson 1992) and in Seamless Morphology (Ford, Singh, and Martohardjono 1997; Singh and Starosta 2003). These two represent major theoretical contrary views. Whereas the former considers "words" as being structured, the latter takes them as unstructured. Consequently, they recognize the basic element or unit in the study of morphology differently--either it is the morpheme or it is the word. From this basic difference follows other conceptual distinctions not only in terms of accounting for inflection and derivation but also what items are entered in the lexicon. We will assume that, as argued in previous works, the morphology component of the grammar is located in the lexicon. The rules and/or processes involved in the morphological system of a language are stated there. This in effect organizes the content of the lexicon to include not only the list of meaningful forms but also the set of relations existing among different forms. Examples will be drawn primarily from Tagalog and other Philippine languages, especially in discussing how each view accounts for certain morphological processes such as reduplication, compounding and cliticization. As we compare them, we hope that their individual strengths and weaknesses will serve as guide in the choice of which one to apply in making an adequate account of the morphological system of a given language.

In addition, I will consider insights from at least some relevant psycholinguistic studies pertaining to the acquisition or processing of morphological forms. To my mind, such studies reflect what the native speaker knows (or does not know) of the morphology of his/her language. And the theory that takes into account this morphological knowledge is, in my judgment, the theory to be preferred.

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