

Preface

What follows represents an attempt to integrate what I believe to be a reasonably well-motivated account of morphological structure into a general theory of generative grammar. The work deals mainly with questions of derivational morphology, though inflection is touched upon briefly in a few places; compounds, despite the title, will not be discussed.

Historically, morphology and generative grammar have been uneasy bedfellows, and I cannot presume that all of my readers will be equally conversant with both. On morphology, happily, there are several good introductory works. The relevant sections of Bloomfield (1933) are, to my mind, the best of these. Matthews (1974) is more detailed and also contains discussions of many of the more persistent problems. These problems have also received great attention in the structuralist literature on morphemic analysis. Bloch (1947), Hockett (1947), Nida (1948), and Harris (1948) form the classic core. Harris' views are presented in further detail in his *Methods* book (1951). As for generative grammar, I adopt the general perspective of Chomsky (1972a) and Chomsky and Halle (1968) (henceforth SPE).

A few words about personal peculiarities. In the tradition of SPE, I tend to use spelling where others might use transcription. I will only use transcription when I wish to emphasize phonological properties. In these cases I use square brackets ([]) not solely for phonetic transcription but, as in SPE, indiscriminately to represent any level of a phonological derivation. I depart from this practice only when quoting from other sources. I have avoided the term *lexeme* for personal reasons and use instead the term *word*. This means that I have no way of distinguishing an uninflected word (lexeme) from an inflected word (word). I am confident that the ambiguity will not cause much grief. I use the term *morpheme* in the American structuralist sense, which means that a morpheme must have phonological substance and cannot be simply a unit of meaning. Entities such as PLURAL and PAST, which have many phonological realizations and which were problematic within earlier frameworks, are considered to be syntactic markers and not morphemes.

We find comfort in precedent. It is convenient when introducing a notion which may not be uncontroversial to defend the introduction with an allusion to its commonness in older thought. This may reflect a deep ecclesiastical conviction. It is more conventionally considered to be a sign of modesty. Modesty, though, is a convenient cover for a less virtuous attitude: when something is not ours, we can easily disclaim ultimate responsibility for it. With this in mind, let me say that the basic view of the workings of morphology presented in this work is not new.

However, to my knowledge, there has been no previous attempt to integrate it into the general framework which I am proposing, that of generative transformational grammar. I believe that this framework is essentially correct. The truth or falsity of my views must be proved within it, not within some more general theory of epistemology, and all responsibility for the assertion of these views therefore rests with me. Nevertheless, I must acknowledge my predecessors and others who have helped to form my thoughts, and my debts to them.

I have benefited greatly from the work of Hans Marchand, especially his book *The Categories and Types of Present-Day English Word-Formation* (1969). Marchand's views on the workings of word structure are a principal source of mine, though the framework in which he is working is radically different. The book has also been a valuable source of data. There is no more complete work on the subject of English morphology. Of the small literature on morphology within generative grammar I owe much to Karl Zimmer's *Affixal Negation* (1964), Morris Halle's "Prolegomena to a Theory of Word-Formation" (1973a), Uriel Weinreich's "Problems in the Analysis of Idioms" (1969), and Dorothy Siegel's regrettably still unpublished "Some Lexical Transderivational Constraints in English" (1971).

The sketch of English phonology presented in SPE has been as indispensable as it must be to any work remotely connected with that domain. The influence of Paul Kiparsky's "Phonological Representations" (1973) has also been considerable. In syntax, I have adopted the lexicalist hypothesis of Chomsky's "Remarks on Nominalization" (1970). This monograph, however, does not depend on the extended standard theory of Chomsky (1972b, 1973), though my own prejudices towards that viewpoint are undeniable. On the most general plane I must cite two works, Noam Chomsky's *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965) and Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (1953), which I can only hope not to have abused.

This work is a somewhat revised and expanded version of my 1974 MIT doctoral dissertation. I am especially indebted to Morris Halle, my thesis director and esteemed colleague, for discussion throughout and since the preparation of that document. I am similarly grateful to Ken Hale and Paul Kiparsky, the other members of my thesis committee, and to my fellow students Alan Prince, Richard Oehrle, John Ross, Dorothy Siegel, and Edwin Williams. Frank Anshen, Emmon Bach, Alice Davison, and Steve Lapointe have provided invaluable comments on the earlier version. Frances Kelley has guided me through much of the revision.

The research of which this monograph is a result was made possible by doctoral fellowships from the Canada Council and the Department of Education of the Province of Quebec. I am grateful to these bodies.

Mark Aronoff

June 1975

Sound Beach and Old Field, New York

Word Formation in Generative Grammar

BLANK PAGE

1: Ground

We will be concerned in this work with the internal structure of words, a subject which, in the linguistic literature, is called *morphology*.

The notion *word* has long concerned students of language. Its definition is a long-standing problem in linguistics, and entire volumes have been devoted to the subject (e.g. Worth (1972)). A reasonably detailed procedure for isolating phonological words (units which may be considered as words for phonological purposes) is provided in Chomsky and Halle (1968, 366–370; henceforth SPE). Further refinements of this approach are discussed in Selkirk (1972). Syntactically, Postal (1969) puts forth a persuasive argument that the word, as a syntactic unit, corresponds to the *anaphoric island*, which is a syntactic string the internal elements of which cannot participate in anaphora. Though semantic definition of the notion is a traditional goal, it has not, to my knowledge, been achieved.

To say that morphology is word structure is not to say that all of the structure of the word is encompassed in the domain of morphology. There is a branch of phonology, termed *phonotactics* or *morpheme structure*, which concerns itself with the determination of possible sequences of sounds in a given language, “possible phonetic words”. This is not morphology. Morphology treats words as *signs*: that is, not just as forms, but as meaningful forms. It is therefore concerned with words which are not simple signs, but which are made up of more elementary ones. This concern encompasses two distinct but related matters: first, the analysis of existing composite words, and second, the formation of new composite words. A unified theory of morphology should be capable of dealing with both of these areas in a unified and coherent manner, though it may not be possible or even desirable, as we will argue below, to treat them in exactly the same manner.

On the subject of unified theories, it should be stressed that morphology, as defined, is a small subsystem of the entire system of a language. A theory of morphology must be integrated or at least integrable into a fairly specific general theory of language. As a subsystem and a subtheory, morphology may have its own peculiarities; a system can be unified without being completely uniform. However, it does not exist in a vacuum. The present work is conceived in the general framework of transformational grammar as outlined in such works as Chomsky (1965) and SPE. More particularly, it presupposes the lexicalist hypothesis of Chomsky (1970) and at least the spirit, if not the letter, of Kiparsky’s views with regard to phonological abstractness, discussed in Kiparsky (1973).