PAPER 6 (DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS)
What is a morpheme and what are various types of morpheme?

According to Gleason, "Morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit in the structure of a language." Hockett has defined a morpheme as "the smallest individually meaningful element in the utterances of a language." As for example, 'singer' /si / has two morphemes: /si / is one morpheme and / / is also considered a separate morpheme, because in singer /si /, 'er' has the same meaning as it has in the words dancer /d ns / and player /plei /.

But the above definition cannot be accepted in all cases, for there are examples of elements where status of morpheme is not disputed even though they cannot validly be said to have any independent meaning. For instance, one infinite 'to' in "He has to go" is one standard example. The other example is of the auxiliary 'do' in "They do not speak Greek."

Indeed, the occurrence of these elements (to, do) is fully determined by syntactic construction and those elements cannot make an independent contribution to the meaning of the sentence.

So the meaningfulness is not a necessary condition for morpheme. This illustrates the independence of syntax from semantic one, and is not definable in terms of the semantic notion of meaningfulness.

Thus the previous definition may be revised as: morpheme is the smallest or minimal grammatical unit in the utterance of a language. Gleason says that, "morpheme is the smallest unit which is grammatically pertinent."

MORPHEME DISCOVERY PROCEDURE

Morphemes can be identified only by comparing samples of a language. If two or more samples can be found in which there is some feature of expression which all share and some feature of content which all hold in common, then one requirement is met, and these samples may be tentatively identified as a morpheme and its meaning. Thus boys /b iz/, girls / g rlz/, roads /rowdz/ are all alike in containing s /z/ and meaning 'two or more'. We therefore identify s /z/ as a morpheme meaning 'plural'. This is not actually sufficient. "In addition, there must be some contrast between samples with similar meaning and content", some of which have the tentative morpheme and some of which do not. Comparison of boy /b i/ will serve to confirm the example we have just discussed. That such a condition is necessary is shown by the following words: bug /b g/, bee /bi:/, beetle /bi:tl/, butterfly /b t rflai/. It seems ridiculous to suggest that since all these include /b/ and all mean kind of insect, /b/ must be a morpheme. But this is only because, as native speakers, we know that / g/, /i:/, /i:tl/ and / t rflai/ do not exist as morphemes that can be associated with these words. Finally, it is necessary to ascertain that what we have isolated are actually single morphemes rather than combinations.

Morphemes may also be defined in terms of allomorph and for this the description of allomorph is necessary.

ALLOMORPHS: It frequently happens that a particular morpheme is not represented everywhere by the same morph, but by different morphs in different environments. The alternative phonological manifestations or representations of such a morpheme are called allomorphs, or 'morpheme alternates' or 'morpheme variants'. Gleason defines allomorphs as, "a variant of a morpheme which occurs in certain definable

environments". For instance, the plural morpheme has generally three representations, i.e. allomorphs. They are /-s/ in /k ts/, /-z/ in /d gz/ and /-iz/ in /h siz/.
Allomorphs are of two types:
1. Phonologically conditioned allomorphs, and
2. Morphologically conditioned allomorphs.
1. PHONOLOGICALLY CONDITIONED ALLOMORPHS: When the allomorphs are conditioned by the phonetic nature of the preceding phoneme, they are said to be phonologically conditioned allomorphs. For example, the three allomorphs of the plural morphemes are represented by /-s/ occurs after voiceless sounds, /-z/ occurs after voiced sounds and /-iz/ occurs after groove fricatives and affricates. So these allomorphs are called phonologically conditioned allomorphs.
2. MORPHOLOGICALLY CONDITIONED ALLOMORPHS: When allomorphs are determined by the specific morpheme or morphemes forming the content, rather than by phonological features, they are called morphologically conditioned allomorphs i.e. / / which only occurs with three morphemes. They are ox / ks/, brother /b r r/, and child /caild/.

After discussing the concept of allomorphs we may define a morpheme in a different way also as "a morpheme is a class of allomorphs, which are symmetrically similar and are in complementary distribution.

TYPES OF MORPHEMES

(A) ROOT MORPHEME: Root morpheme is the ultimate constituent element common to all cognate words, i.e. that element of a word which remains after the removal of all inflectional endings, formatives, etc. For example, black /bl k/, bite /b it/, neck /nek/.
(B) AFFIXIAL MORPHEME: Affixial morphemes are subsidiary to root morphemes as /-s/, /-z/, /-iz/, and /-iz/.
Affixial morphemes are of two types:
1. Prefixial morphemes: These are those affixial morphemes which precede the root morpheme with which they are most closely associated. For example:
/pri:/ in /pri:fiks/, /ri:/ in /ri:fil/.
2. Suffixial morphemes: Those affixial morphemes that follow the root morphemes are called suffixial morphemes. They are closely associated to the root morphemes they follow. For instance: /-iz/ in /s fiksiz/; /-iz/ in /joviz/.
(C) STEM MORPHEMES: The root morphemes or the constructions consisting of a root morphemes and one or more other morphemes, to which affixial morphemes can be added are called stem morphemes.

So, a stem morpheme is "any morpheme or combination of morphemes to which an affix can be added".
Example: friends /frendz/ contains a stem morpheme /frend/, which is also a root morpheme, and an affixial morpheme /-z/. Friendships /frendsips/ contains an affixial morpheme /-s/ and a stem /frendsip/, which however is not a root, since it consists of two morphemes.
(D) COMPOUND MORPHEMES: Some stem morphemes or words contain two or more roots; they are said to be compound morphemes. As black-bird /bl kb rd/ is a compound morpheme containing two root morphemes, i.e. black /bla k/ and bird /b rd/. Blackbirds /bla kb rdz/ contains a compound morpheme and an affixial morpheme.

(E) STEMFORMATIVE MORPHEMES: Certain affixial morphemes form stem morphemes and as such have little meaning other than the linguistic functions. Such morphemes may be called stem-formative morphemes.
Example: Thermometer /O m mit / is composed of stem-formative /- / and /mit /. The first of these is formed from the root thereby adding the stem formative /- -/.
(F) UNIQUE MORPHEME: Some morphemes are of special kind and they are known as unique morphemes. As in cranberry /kra nb ri/, 'cran' /kra n/ is a unique morpheme. Though 'cran' does not occur anywhere except in this combination, it clearly carries a meaning. Again /kra nb ri/ is different from strawberry /str b ri/ or raspberry /ra zb ri/. So whatever be the meaning of /kra n/ it differs from the other kinds of 'berries'. Here it might be hard to describe the meaning of cran /kra n/, but it is easily demonstrated in a fruit market. So cran /kra n/ is a unique morpheme.
(G) DERIVATIONAL MORPHEME: The morpheme that forms new word from existing root morpheme is called "derivational morpheme."
Example: The morpheme 'al' / l/ forms adjective like critical /kritik l/ from the noun 'critic' /kritik/. Similarly the morpheme 'er' / / forms a noun as singer /sin / from the verb sing /sin/.
Adjective from verb: able / bl/ morpheme forms an adjective acceptable / ksept bl/ from the verb accept / ksept/.
(H) INFLECTIONAL MORPHEME: It is that morpheme by adding of which to certain ending of the root morpheme, we get certain grammatical relationships and functions and aspects. It always occurs at the end of the stem and gives no scope for other affixation.
Example: love /l v/, loves /l vz/ and loving /l vin/. In these examples we notice that if in root morphemes 'love' /l v/ singular allomorph /-z/ (or inflectional morpheme /-z/) or allomorphs /-in/ (or inflectional morpheme /-in/) is added, the meaning of the word does not change from the root word. But it denotes that loves /l vz/ is the present tense singular number of the root verb 'love' /l v/, and loving /l vin/ is the present participle of the root verb /l v/.
(I) ZERO MORPHEME: The use of zero morphs and morphemes were first suggested by Sanskrit grammarians. A zero morph of the English noun phrasal morphemes has been assumed by same to occur in a word like sheep (plural). It would be present in "The sheep are grazing", but it would not be clear whether or not it is present in "The sheep must graze", since the sentence is ambiguous. Because of this difficulty some linguists prefer to say that it is a question. 'Plural' simply fails to occur with words of this type, e.g. sheep; for them this word would thus have neither a singular nor a plural form but a 'numberless' one.