Spring 2-1-2019

LING 589.01: Morphology

Tully J. Thibeau
University of Montana - Missoula, tully.thibeau@umontana.edu

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/syllabi

Recommended Citation

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

- When and Where: Tue./Thur. 11:00 to 12:20 @ Social Sciences Building Room 254
- Office Hours: TR 2:00 to 3:30 or by appointment
- Phone: 243-2693 (front desk)
- Email: tully.thibeau@umontana.edu

Table of Contents

Course Reflections

The study of the subsystem of language referred to as *morphology* has as its etymological source Morpheus, the name of a Greek god and a son of the god of sleep, Somnus (according to Ovid).[1] God's (like superheroes) have their own individual capabilities, Morpheus' being shape-shifting.

Henceforward, *morpho* meant *shape* (or form). As a tag for scientific investigation, *morphology* is a loanword from German, ostensibly coined by Goethe (Zur Morphologie, 1817), who used it as a term for biology, a natural science (as opposed to a social science or humanity, for example).

---

[1] trans. H. Gregory (1958, p. 317); see also E. Hamilton's Mythology (1942, p. 144)
[2] from Thibault's Re-reading Saussure (1997, pp. 4-5)

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

It was presumably expropriated by Schleicher, who used it "für die Lehre von der Wortform" (from Zur Morphologie der Sprache, in Volume 1, Issue 7, Mémoires de L'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Pétersbourg, 1859, p. 35). Some initial perceptions of language were likened to "organisms in the natural world" (Chomsky, 1975, p. 139), no longer an uncontroversial view.

Saussure disputed Schleicher's stance on change over time as being driven by external forces but granted a natural approach, likening a system of language to plants whose growth is determined by internal forces (comparable to Goethe's attention to inner development against outward traits).

Nor is it unprecedented to consider synchronic development to be biological (Lightfoot, 1981).

To keep within the realm of biology briefly, let's accept that organisms are made of genotypes, their genetic makeup consisting of *terms* (height, color, flowers, etc. in pea plants, for example) that may express themselves as observable phenotypes (tall-short, green-yellow, axial-terminal). I may even be so bold as to extend the Mendelian revolution to human languages and thus muse that alleged *categories* (more descriptively categorial labels) are such *terms*: for instance, voice.

Typically in a morphology course, its content would include examining active-passive voice, but it may be more instructive to consider a genealogical origin of one passive, Indo-European (IE), with distinct voice *categories* active-middle. The latter involved an *affix* that distinguished it from the former by "convey[ing a] reflexive or reciprocal meaning" (Lehmann, 1974, p. 183), or a contrasting *value* (as per Saussure). Such constructions referred to subjects in a particular way but eventually were employed to also include an oblique causative using instrumental form, thus attuning the value of "to hasten (oneself)" nearer the value of "to be beset (by/with something)," the source of the passive "as a separate category" in IE's various descendant languages (ibidem).

A value for a given *shape* does not lie outside the system but in the systems' making of meaning. To recoup vocabulary of Bakhtin[2], this *value* may be approached centripetally or centrifugally, from a social science perspective of the collective or from a humanities perspective of the author.

From a natural science perspective, a new expression is distributed to an already existing *term*, its *value* having been partly determined by the interconnectedness of formerly prevailing values.

From a linguistic perspective, value becomes fundamental because pea plants enact no meaning.

---

[2] from Thibault's Re-reading Saussure (1997, pp. 4-5)

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

Linguistic naturalness: virtually methodology

An early dictionary of linguistics defines morphology as inquiry on word-forms and -formations (1954)[3], not unlike Schleicher's "the science of word-form," and a more recent one (1997)[4] refers to a science of a *grammar* of words and their varied displays (e.g., inflectional and derivational).

The notion being floated in the latter definition is, words have internal structure, like sentences. The idea raises a question for linguists: Is a device responsible for internal structure of sentences also responsible for internal structure of words? Because the question invites a yes/no response, it suggests potential for debate and also presumes internal structure as well as a device causing it.

I'll proceed cautiously, then, by beginning with some reputedly easy givens, form and function; in other words, words and/or sentences of human languages come in *shapes* that disclose *values*.

At this point, more skeptical readers would propose that I'm possibly already treading on thin ice, that *shapes* are merely idealized abstractions and *values* are indiscernible by direct observations, thus subject to misinterpretation. Regarding this surmise, I differ only with the use of treading: When I'm on thin ice, I do not plod on my feet; rather, I lie on my stomach and crawl prudently.

In science, as in theater, safety must come first, an axiomatic decree for any sound methodology.

Facets of methodology

Methodology is typically comprised of three basic ingredients, listed here in no particular order: theory, intent and technique. The aforesaid yes/no question demands a theory, a yes response associated with one superset of theories, a no response to another or even a variety of supersets. Let's count two schools of thought (the yes and no) briefly and dispose of them almost entirely.

theory

A yes response claims that sentence- and word-formation become indistinguishable in enterprise once operations formerly attendant on a *lexical component* (i.e., word-formation) get *distributed* amidst the other subsystems of a *grammar* (sentence- and sound-formation as well as semantics).

A no response claims that word-formation exists discretely from other subsystems in grammar and capacitates diverse types of *shapes* (piloting internal structure of both syntax and semantics).

---

[3] see Pei and Gaynor's Dictionary of Linguistics, Philosophical Library
[4] see Matthew's Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics, Oxford University Press

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

Each theory subsumes a Lexicon inventorying pronunciation, interpretation, predication, and class membership (e.g., part-of-speech), likely also including variation (social, regional, formal). An effort to discard or sustain *morphological computation* is a prominent facet of methodology.

intent

Another facet, intent, addresses selection and organization of the content of the object of study, including the objectives sought by participants in the field of study and the roles played by them.

Customarily, design conveys information characteristic of a syllabus, so I'll presently set aside specific content and simplify matters into one classical definition of the intention of linguistics: Write a *grammar* of L, a naturally occurring human language, historically or contemporaneously.

A *grammar* of L contains all L's forms (*shapes*) and functions (*values*) each of L's forms fulfill, often resulting in one-to-one correspondences as well as one-to-many and many-to-one matches. A *grammar* would outwardly represent what L's native speakers know, form-function mappings.

Henceforward, knowledge of L must obviously include those of its *shapes* that are formed well (and thus map onto function), but it should also include *shapes* that can be feasibly formed well (and accordingly enter into conceivable mappings onto functions that are yet to be necessitated). Furthermore, it may, by necessity, need to exclude any *shapes* that cannot be viably formed well.

This alleged exigency, anticipated by *generative grammar*, partially overlies the facet of theory (one or two *computational components* constraining attainable *shape*) and the facet of technique: respectively, the shapes that are truly attainable and the native speakers who truly attain them.

technique

One apparent juncture of technique and intent is participants, their roles and objectives as well as the range of content pertinent to these that can be truly covered in the space of a course syllabus.

Once again, presently setting aside specific content and simplifying matters as was done hitherto, I resort to classic linguistic mode, describing a word's internal structure as *radical* and *formative*: the latter synthesized with or isolated from the former, the former being unanalyzable (or prime).

This dyadic description invites peril, mainly due to assurances that *shapes* are divisible as such: For example, the English form [hɪt] cannot authentically be divided into two units of meaning when it may (as it happens) cover information about *terms* tense or aspect, purportedly realized by what Bloomfield claims the Hindus called a *zero element* (1933, p. 209, original emphasis). In contrast, rather than lacking a *shape*, one unit of meaning may be realized in multiple *shapes*,

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

like English prefixes [ɪm], [ɪn], [iŋ], [il] and [iɹ], branded as allomorphs (lit. "other *shapes*") of the same morpheme (one *shape* significance of contrast[5], in this case, a ***not X*** polarized by ***X***).

Methodological repercussions
Allomorphy, or the many-to-one matches that map several forms onto one function (as above), suggests to some a chance quality to sound-meaning equivalences, and the idea of a zero element suggests to some a pretense; conversely, for those prone to these suggestions, the natural matches of one-to-one correspondences help offset the most impartial incredulity and also align agreeably with facilitating mental processing of information represented linguistically (Bybee, 1985, p. 3).

Subsequently, one might anticipate languages that, in their near entirety, demonstrate behaviors commensurable with English suppletions, such as [ɡo] v. [wɛnt], [ɡʊd] v. [bɛɹ] and possibly [wʊmən] v. [wɪmɪn], ranking as one of Sapir's symbolic languages, neither affixing formatives nor altering radicals (1921, p. 126; fn. 8 tenders a plausible psychological reality to symbolisms).

Some studies in morphology classify such languages as a remote end of an assorted continuum, (Bybee, 1985, p. 12), and, while this characterization is not without merit, it may actually make such types of language classifications tidier than an accumulation of human languages indicate, (Sapir, 1921, p. 122), with variances so subtle that basic training entails utter disregard (p. 127).

Course Content: Description and Outcomes

Description
It surely seems curious to inform students in a morphology course that human languages exhibit "elusive, yet important, distinctions" only in the very end "to ignore them" (ibidem, fn. 10), yet the introductory character of the course content imposes both a responsible and realistic bearing. As a survey of the world's languages, the content comprises a number of them, mostly unrelated and generally demonstrative of numerous conglomerations of *radicals* with *formatives* observed. Such an overview reveals elements of language typology and bolsters skills in linguistic analysis.

Outcomes
1. Increase and intensify familiarity with the trade jargon related to *radical* and *formative*, like analytic, (poly)synthetic, isolating, affixing, inflective, agglutinative, and symbolic.
2. Apply trade jargon judiciously to *shapes* where descriptive vocabulary is defensible and recognize when such analyses seem misguided, thus symptomatic of alternative inquiries.
3. Assign *shapes* to units of meaning where feasible and to the degree plausible, recalling the *zero element* or *zero morphs* (semantically vacuous *shapes*, like Latin theme vowels).

---

[5] an epitome of *value*, drawn from opposition, as in Culler's Ferdinand de Saussure (1976, p. 26)

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

4. Employ semantic measures such as categorial labels for meaning (material or relational) to ascertain word-formation procedures described in (1) affecting radicals and formatives.
5. Initiate a *grammar* of L by sketching some morphological features typifying L that are identified in an available description of L, preferably one not meant to teach the use of L.

Course Requirements

Undergraduate			Graduate		
i.	Assignments	49% (7%x7)	i.	Assignments	49% (7%x7)
ii.	Exams/Quizzes	36%	ii.	Exams/Quizzes	24%[6]
iii.	Morphological Sketch	15%	iii.	Morphological Sketch	15%
			iv.	Graduate Increment	12%

Morphological Sketch

1. Pair up and write a morphological sketch of a language (Solo for grad students)

2. Choice of Language

❖ Choose a language (un)commonly taught/studied – but it must be copiously described.
❖ Do not decide on a language without confirming the existence of an available description.
❖ Find a language that has a descriptive grammar and evade pedagogical grammars if possible.

Format

1. Your sketch must include at least:
• genetic/geographic classification (as well as speaker population),
   • morphological type,
   • derivational and/or inflectional morphology, and
   • morpho-syntax (phonology only if necessary to explain the morphology).
2. Your sketch must...
   • include *examples* for each word-formation process introduced,
   • target for summary major characteristics that differ significantly from English or other commonly-taught languages (or summarize something that is new to you),
   • discuss how at least one difference may complicate an issue of theory,
   • be double-spaced, 5-8 pages (Undergraduate), 7-12 pages (Graduate), including references.

Morphology Data (Graduate Increment)

▪ Create a data-set problem.

▪ On a separate sheet, analyze your data set and articulate what this exercise demonstrates/introduces in terms of morphology.

---

[6] Quizzes = in-class activities, 5% & 3% of final grade, undergraduate and graduate, respectively

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

- Select a language that is morphologically challenging to you. Your data-set may help us to concentrate any of the characteristics we covered in class. If the topic was not covered in class, add information of what it is (with citation). Cite where these data come from.

I assess final grades based on scores accrued from assignments, exams and the sketch. I gauge scores earned in several ways: according to percentage (points earned divided by total points), percentile (points earned to be measured on a "curve"), and quartile (points earned as separated into fourths, e.g., top 25%, bottom 25%, etc.). Based on these measures, I make assessments that are represented by traditional letter grade and may also include a distinction made between + / - .

This course must be taken for a traditional letter grade, not credit/no credit, but audit permissible. (Thursday 31 January 2019 at 5:00 p.m. is the latest a student can change grade options to audit).

If you are unsure what traditional letter grades represent, then please note general descriptions:

A means excellent (above 89.5%)   C means competent (roughly 67.5% to 77%)
B means superior (roughly 78% to 89%)   D means below average (below 67%)

Course Policies

Late Policy
All activities, assignments or exams given to the instructor after its due-date are not guaranteed to be either graded (and entered into the grade record) or returned (i.e., students must keep track).

Attendance Policy
Perfect attendance is desired but not expected; excessive absences typically intersect adversely with **late policy** and affect final grades. Students who miss the first two class meetings must drop the course (see URL presented below):

(http://www.umt.edu/catalog/acad/acadpolicy/default.html, under attendance/absence).

Withdrawal Policy
To know more information about withdrawing from a course, see the URL below:

(http://www.umt.edu/withdrawal/AlternateOptions.aspx)

Academic Honesty Policy
All students must observe academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to academic penalty by the instructor of the course and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. As a student in this course and at this university, you must be familiar with the Student Conduct Code (see URL presented below):

(http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php)

Linguistics 489/589   Morphology   Spring 2019

Dr. Tully J. Thibeau

Special Accommodation Policy
If you will need special accommodation in this course due to some learning challenge that has been verified by DSS, please see me very early in the semester (Week Three) so that we can arrive at some appropriate accommodation.

Technology Policy
You may, of course, take class notes on a laptop or iPad or the like. Aside from that, I expect that technology will not intrude during class time. Please consider turning phones to "vibrate" or a similar setting that will not disturb the class.

Do not plan to receive phone calls during the class period

Course Materials

Textbooks
Lieber, R. (2016). Introducing Morphology, 2nd Ed. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Tentative Reading & Assignment/Exam Schedule

	Date	Topic	In-Class	Textbook Reading	Out-of-Class (due)
1.5	Jan 10	methodologies	ø	ø	
	Jan 15	analytic & symbolic languages	*Vietnamese/Turkish*	Chapter 1	
	Jan 17	words and dictionary entries	Chikasaw	Chapters 1 & 2	Swahili & Zoque
2.5	Jan 22	dictionary entries and radicals	*Luiseño?*	Chapter 2	
	Jan 24	radicals & formative	*Swahili?*	Chapter 3, 3.1-3.3	Tamil & Telugu
3.5	Jan 29	radicals & formatives		Chapter 3, 3.4	
	Jan 31		Library Session	(Hockett 1954)	
4.5	Feb 5	(roots versus stems)		Chapter 3, 3.5, 3.7	
	Feb 7	morphological models		Chapters 3 & 4	First-Quarter Exam
5.5	Feb 12	morphological productivity		Chapter 4	
	Feb 14	defining productivity		Chapter 4	
6.6	Feb 19	measuring productivity		Chapters 4	
	Feb 21	creativity & symbolic fusion		Chapters 4 & 5	
7.5	Feb 26	symbolism & analytic language		Chapter 5	
	Feb 28	templatic morphology		Chapter 5	Mid-Term Exam
8.5	Mar 5	material content & relation		Chapters 5 & 6	
	Mar 7	pure & concrete relational		Chapter 6	
9.5	Mar 12	basic & derivational concepts		Chapter 6	
	Mar 14	typological universals?		Chapter 7	
10.5	Mar 19	indications of typologies		Chapter 7	
	Mar 21	morpho-syntax?		Chapter 8	

Supplemental Readings
Additional materials and related details will be presented on the Moodle internet supplement for this course.