

**CLAUDIA GABRIELA PISOSCHI**



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***THE BASICS  
OF  
NOMINAL REFERENCE***

**Second edition**



**Editura UNIVERSITARIA  
CRAIOVA, 2024**

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**Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României**

**PISOSCHI, CLAUDIA GABRIELA**

**The basics of nominal reference** / Claudia Gabriela  
Pisoschi. - Ed. a 2-a. - Craiova : Universitaria, 2024

Conține bibliografie

ISBN 978-606-14-2094-0

811.111

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## **Chapter I**

### **MORPHOLOGY – A BRANCH OF LINGUISTICS**

**1.1. The connection between the various branches of linguistics**

**1.2. The basic unit of analysis**

**1.3. The domain of Morphology. Derivation and inflection**

**1.3.1. The domain of Morphology**

**1.3.2. Derivation and inflection**

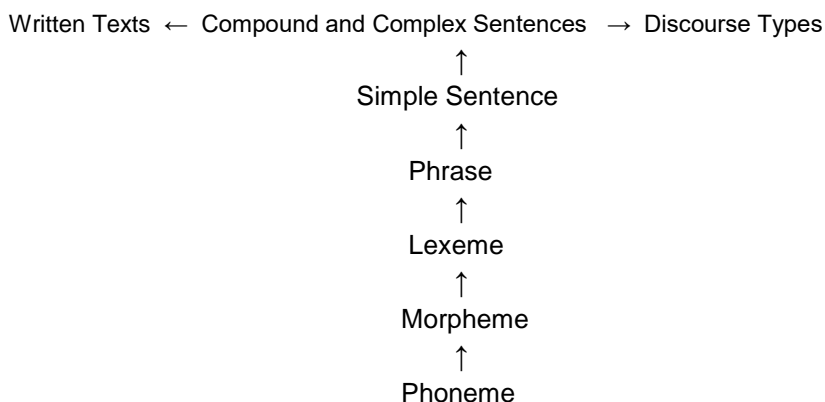
**Topics for discussion**

**1.1. The connection between the various branches of linguistics**

Dealing with the form and changes of form that a certain word can undergo in various contexts, morphology is linked both to the level of linguistic form and to that of content; phonemes are combined into morphemes; the latter can have a meaning of their own, both lexical and grammatical, which links morphology to semantics; in their turn, morphemes make up words that can be combined into sentences, hence the relation between morphology and syntax. A native speaker of a language can use a morpho-syntactic structure in various situations of communication to convey different meanings. Therefore, morphology is linked to pragmatics, too. The choice of a certain word in a

certain situation of communication according to a multitude of criteria links morphology to stylistics, each of us expressing ourselves linguistically in a unique manner.

The basic linguistic levels are represented below; except for the phonemic level characterized by form and no content, the superior levels either generally have semantic meaning (the morphemic level) or, even more than that, are bound to express meaning (all the others); as a result of that, they are in the range of study of various branches of linguistics, their domains partly overlapping:



## 1.2. The basic unit of analysis

The basic unit of analysis seems to be the word, a linguistic unit endowed with both form and meaning; another term for the word is *lexeme*. The word is defined by Marchand (1969: 1) as 'the smallest independent, indivisible and meaningful unit of speech, susceptible of

transposition<sup>1</sup> in sentences.’ The terms *independent* and *meaningful* complement each other; the former refers to the use of words as free morphemes, in isolation, while the latter refers to the content of the word. According to the same linguist, a word is a two-facet sign, having both expression (*signifiant*) and content (*signifié*), as F. de Saussure stated. However, the indivisibility of a word is questionable, since it can be further analysed into component morphemes. Sometimes, a word is made up of one morpheme, as in the case of *book*, *learn*, *of*, *no*, etc.

For Adams (1973: 1) the structure of the word has no relevance regarding its appropriate use in various contexts; it is its meaning that prevails:

to understand a word it is not necessary to be aware of how it is constructed or of whether it is simple or complex, that is, whether or not it can be broken into two or more constituents. We are able to use a word which is new to us when we find out what object or concept it denotes. Some words, of course, are more transparent than others.

For the purposes of morphology and since the word can become such an ambiguous term and concept, the term *lexeme* is preferred:

A *lexeme* is a unit of linguistic analysis which belongs to a particular syntactic category, has a particular meaning or grammatical function, and ordinarily enters into syntactic

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<sup>1</sup> Transposition refers to the change of the lexical class of a word; generally, any word can become a different part of speech. It is a property but not a necessary condition.

combinations as a single word; in many instances, the identity of the word which realizes a particular lexeme varies systematically according to the syntactic context in which it is to be used. (Stump, 1998: 13)

For example, the lexeme SING (abstract, and representing a dictionary entry) has multiple concrete realizations (called word forms): *sing*Ø, *sings*, *singing*, *sung*. A lexeme can be made up of one or more constituents, called *morphemes*. A morpheme is an abstract category, the most typical form of a constituent, while a *morph* is its concrete realization. Two or more morphs/alternants that represent the same morpheme are called the *allomorphs* of that morpheme: for example, -s and -es as grammatical suffixes.

The *zero alternant* and *substitution alternants* were proposed to explain forms such as *sheep*, *sang*, etc. The zero alternant or the zero morpheme explains those cases in which one or more morphemes have no concrete realizations: *I sing*Ø vs. *he sings*; *sheep* (sg.) vs. *sheep*Ø (pl.). Substitution alternants designate a concept used to explain the vocalic alternation marking the change of the root in the case of irregular verbs and irregular nouns: *man*–*men*; *sing*–*sang*. The substitution alternants are *a* and *e*, and *i* and *a*, respectively.

A predominantly analytical language, i.e. a language with a poor inflectional system such as English, is characterized by many *portmanteau morphs*, which are the simultaneous concrete realization of several morphemes. In other words, several grammatical categories specific to a certain part of speech can be expressed at formal level by a single morph; it is a process

called *cumulative exponence*, and such inflective languages are called *fusional languages*:

*writes* is made up of the free morph *write* and the bound inflectional morph *-s* marking the following grammatical categories: {Voice}, {Mood}, {Tense}, {Aspect}, {Person}, {Number}. The word-form *writes* has the following features [+Active], [+Indicative], [+Present], [+Indefinite], [+3<sup>rd</sup> person], [+singular].

The zero morph can also be a portmanteau morph: in *sing*Ø, Ø marks all the above-mentioned grammatical categories. The change of the root of a word when it is marked for a certain grammatical category can imply adding an empty morph as in *children* = *child* + *-r-* (empty morph) + *-en* (inflectional suffix marking {Number}, i.e. [+Plural]).

The words realizing a given lexeme can be conceived of both as units of form (as *phonological words*) and as units of grammatical analysis (i.e. as *grammatical words*, such as 'the past tense of SING'); the full set of words realizing a particular lexeme constitutes its *paradigm*. Hence, morphology is the branch of linguistics which studies the paradigms of a language.

The structure of paradigms in a given language is determined by the inventory of morpho-syntactic properties available in that language, which implies co-occurrence restrictions.

### **1.3. The domain of Morphology. Derivation and inflection**

#### **1.3.1. The domain of Morphology**

Stump (1998: 14) does not refer to morphology as a linguistic branch but to its devices, i.e. to the procedures which make possible the interpretation of a word: morphological devices can be used to deduce the words constituting a lexeme's paradigm from that lexeme's root(s) – that part of a word which cannot be further decomposed into smaller units having both form and meaning; on the other hand, morphological devices can be used to deduce new lexemes from existing lexemes. Morphology put to the former, paradigm-deducing use is *inflection*; morphology put to the latter, lexeme-deducing use has traditionally carried the (potentially misleading) label of *word formation*, which encompasses both derivation and compounding.

The conclusion is that lexical elements are not always free and grammatical ones are not always bound, even if most cases would prove otherwise. Fromkin and Rodman (1998: 94) schematize the types of English morphemes:

- bound: affixes (derivational – prefixes such as *pre-*, *un-*, *con-* and suffixes such as *-ly*, *-ist*, *-ment* – or inflectional – suffixes such as *-ing*, *-s*, *-en*, *-ed*, *-er*, *-est*, *-’s*) and roots (*-ceive* as in *receive*, *perceive*, *deceive*, *-mit* as in *submit*, *permit*, *-fer* as in *refer*, *prefer*);
- free: open class made up of content or lexical words – nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs; closed class (function or grammatical words) – conjunctions, prepositions, articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs.

Consequently, there appeared the necessity to distinguish between derivation and inflection. To Valerie Adams (1973: 30), a derived word contains at least one bound form, with no independent existence, and with the more general meaning that one would expect a 'grammatical' element to have.

### **1.3.2. Derivation and inflection**

Stump summarizes the criteria of differentiating between the two processes:

- *change in lexical meaning or part of speech*

Two expressions related by principles of derivation may differ in their lexical meaning, their part-of-speech membership, or both; but two expressions belonging to the same inflectional paradigm will share both their lexical meaning and their lexical class – that is, any differences in their grammatical behavior will stem purely from the morpho-syntactic properties that distinguish the cells of a paradigm. (Stump, 1998: 15)

Two major counterarguments should be considered:

-a change in lexical meaning is not always accompanied by a change in part of speech: for instance, the change of a concrete noun into an abstract noun: *fish* – *fishing*; *friend* – *friendship*;

-synonymous pairs such as *cyclic/cyclical* suggest that derivational morphology need not change lexical meaning: *cyclic evolution* but *cyclical patterns*;

### *-syntactic determination*

A lexeme's syntactic context may require that it be realized by a particular word in its paradigm, but never requires that the lexeme itself belong to a particular class of derivatives (Stump, 1998: 15).

*His ... caused great surprise among his siblings.*

The gap can be filled by a noun, required by the syntactic environment, but there is no restriction regarding the particular type of noun formed by derivation: *arrival* and *arriving* can substitute each other in the context.

- *productivity*: inflection is generally more productive than derivation. (Stump, 1998: 16)

- *semantic regularity*: inflection is semantically more regular than derivation. (Stump, 1998: 17)

Inflection rules apply without any gaps, only the concrete ways of doing so being different, whereas derivation rules feature many gaps:

*perspire*- *perspiration* vs. *acquire* -*\*acquisition*

*ambiguous* – *ambiguate* vs. *prestigious*<sup>2</sup>- *\*prestigiare*<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> both the noun and the adjective had derogatory meaning till the 19-th century; the meaning "having dazzling influence" of the adjective is attested from 1913 while sense of "dazzling influence" of the noun first applied 1815, to Napoleon. (<http://www.etymonline.com>)

<sup>3</sup> Though Philip Butterworth (2005: 184) mentions the verb *to prestigiare* explained in OED as having the meaning 'to deceive by jugglery or as by magic; to delude' and originating in the Latin verb *praestigiare*, probably altered by dissimilation from *praestringere* "to

- *closure*: inflection closes words to further derivation, while derivation does not. (Stump, 1998: 18)

The postposition of inflections in relation to derivational suffixes proves the above statement; one cannot mark a word for inflection and then turn it into another part of speech; only deciding on the word's lexical class can the appropriate inflection markers be attached to it.

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blind, blindfold, dazzle', once the derogatory meaning of the noun and adjective disappeared, the verb was no longer part of the word family. (<http://www.etymonline.com>)

## Topics for discussion

I. Do you agree with Adams' considerations on word structure and use (1973: 1)? Justify.

II. What can you say about the structure of examples such as *singing*, *studies*, *read*? Are they ambiguous?

Analyse morphematically: *write*, *information*, *sheep*, *beautifully*.

Compare the previous examples with the Latin *amo* and the French *allons* and *irai*.

III. Consider the example of *-ful* as an adjectival and a nominal suffix. In which case is the suffix more productive in contemporary English?

IV. Compare in point of further derivation:

*lionesses*, *reasonable*, *furthermost*, *widowers*, *coming*.

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## **Chapter II**

### **ARTICLES AS DETERMINERS**

#### **2.1. Determination and determiners**

#### **2.2. The article as a determiner**

##### **2.2.1. Definition**

##### **2.2.2. Classification**

##### **2.2.3. Form. General characteristics**

##### **2.2.4. Functions**

#### **Topics for discussion**

#### **2.1. Determination and determiners**

*Determination* should be seen as an abstract grammatical category which is specific to nouns. It appeared as a result of the necessity to refer to a particular item or to an entire category of items.

*Determiners* are the concrete realization of the property of determination; they represent a class of words (some of them having lexical meaning, too – *both, double, half*, etc) which have the function of specifying the reference area of the noun they determine. Being essentially functional words, they make up a closed system, i.e. their inventory cannot be enriched.

*Position.* In some languages, such as Romanian, articles may be attached to the noun, behaving like