

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX IN THE STUDY OF MEANING IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

Morphology and Syntax play vital roles in the study of meaning in the English Language. While morphology deals with the internal arrangement of words and the inflections, syntax in its own parts deals with the rules which govern the arrangement of words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. So, this work was done to present a comparative analysis of morphology and syntax in the study of meanings in the English Language: The writer examined the language as new Horizon in English Education from access to quality. The term horizon mean the furthest that one can see, where the sky seems to meet the land or the sea. Usually, the limit of ones desires, knowledge or interests - Oxford Advance Learners Dictionary 9th edition from the dictionary, the general meaning of term access can be found as a way of entering or reaching a place, the opportunity or right to use something or to see somebody or something drawing our attention to the content we are using the word in this theme, it is referring to access course of Education that prepares students without the usual qualifications, in order that they can study at university or college and so the theme says "from access to quality".

Keywords: Comparative, Comparative Analysis, Morphology, Syntax.

Morphology is the subfield of linguistics that studies the internal structure of word and relationship among words. Adrian, Richard et al (2006). It is the study of structure of words. Morphology in Emodi and Ezeama (2014). It is a level of language analysis which deals with the internal arrangement of words and their inflections. It seeks to analyze, describe and classified meaningful grammatical units and how these units (morphemes) are organized in the process of word formation. In order words, Emodi and Ezeoma (2014) maintain that the concept morphology is a branch of linguistics which preoccupies itself with word formation rules, which in turn determines organization of the internal structure of words into minimal meaningful units of grammatical analysis. According to the same Emodi and Ezeoma (2014) "morphology can either be inflectional or derivational".

The major word formation process is affixation. This occurs through pre-fixation, in-fixation and suffixation depending on where the morphemic element is introduced into the structure of a word. Other word, formation processes include compounding, clipping, acronym reduplicative, blending, conversion, word formation and neologism.

Syntax on the other hand from the work of Emodi and Ezeoma (2014) "is essentially the grammar of the language, the rules which govern the arrangement of words into phrases, clauses, and sentences. The words are not randomly arranged or combined in language, instead they followed a linearly structured "order". The organization of words into larger grammatical structures follows rules which language users internalized for construction of structured and orderly sentence that can be understood. Such structural rules culminate into the syntax of the language so in linguistics syntax simply means the study of the rules that govern the ways in which words combine to form phrases, clause and sentences.

Definition and Nature of Morphology

Although opinions have varied as to the precise definition of the scope and area of morphology over the years, most scholars agreed to the status of the subject as an aspect of language study that concern itself with the forms of words themselves different from syntax which concerns itself with how words arrange themselves in sentences. The study of morphology must have been prompted by nineteen century interest in classifying language families across the word.

This has led to other study of how languages were differently structured both in broader and narrower ways, from the general laws of structure to the study of significant elements such as prefixes and inflections. This was later build upon to include the study of internal structure of words in the twentieth century.

Different Approaches of Defining a Morpheme

***Structural Approach:** Across boards, all linguistics agree that, within words, meaningful parts can be perceived, any excise that is aimed at studying meaningful elements within a word is said to be termed as morphology. Morphology therefore is the study of meaningful parts of the word. The word **teacher** for instance comprises two components namely **teach**(verb) and **er** (suffix) this is what morphology seeks to explain.

Olorunfoba – Oju (1994) defines morpheme in terms of its placement among other units of grammar as ‘the smallest meaningful –bearing unit in a word’. Ayodele (2001) defines it as ‘the smallest unit which exhibits an internal structure and meaning of its own but which cannot be further broken up’. An attempt to analyze the structure of this component parts leads to morphology. Morphology thus deals with the internal structure of word-forms. Lyons (1974) quoted in Odebunmi (2006) views morphemes as ‘minimal units of grammatical analyses, the unit of the lowest rank out of which words the unit of the next ‘higher’ rank are composed’. Bello (2001) coming from the perceptive of the status of morpheme in the unit of grammar defines it as ‘the smallest meaningful unit in the structure of a language’ by smallest meaningful unit, she meant the unit which cannot be further broken up without destroying or drastically altering its meaning. For example though the word **reality** can be further broken down into **real** and **ity** (making two morphemes) it can be further broken down without altering its meaning. This shows the common different between **reality** and **realities**: an attempt to further break down the former, result into producing an entirely different meaning in the plural sense. One may also not be able to add a morpheme to an utterance without uttering the meaning of such utterance. For example adding **un** to **known** changes it to unknown and so alter the meaning of the former. Bloomfield (1933) quoted in Nida (1974) corroborates in this description by defining it as ‘a linguistic form which bears no parallel phonetic, semantic, resemblances, to any form’.

***Semantic approach:** Crystal (1976) defines a morpheme as ‘the smallest bit of language which has a meaning’. As the smallest meaningful unit of the grammar of a language, it cannot be broken down into any other meaningful unit. It is the minimal unit used in building words in a language which cannot be further splinted without entering the meaning. For example ‘if you add morpheme to an utterance, or take away, by the definition you alter the meaning of the utterance’. For example adding – **tion to locate** changes it to location which with- ‘s’ becomes **locations**. In attempting to classify morphemes into types, Odebunmi (ibid) opines that the forms and formations of **passes** and **disregarded** can only understood when defined in terms of their meaning relations. In these two examples **pass** and **regard** will be said to be free morphemes for without them – **es, dis- and – ed**, are not capable of making any **sense**. ***Phonological Approach:** Bello describes morpheme in terms of its phonological properties. In this sense, a morpheme could be said to make up just a phoneme. For instance, each of the plural makers in English (**eg –s as in boy – boys**) could be considered as morpheme thus, the (s) in boys count as a morpheme. She stresses that if morphemes are the smallest units of any languages and are made up of either single phonemes and or more than one phoneme as a case maybe then a combination of phoneme must conform to certain rules or posses given characteristic to qualify as morphemes.

Possible Interrelationship between the Different Definitions of the Morphemes

Crystal (1976) agglutinates the three criteria for defining morpheme. He believes it can be viewed from three major angles. Firstly, it is a formal or physical unit, it has a phonetic shape. Secondly, it has a meaning, and thirdly, it has a syntactic role to play in the construction of a larger grammatical unit. We can illustrate this with the following examples; **these bad boys wanted the room**, these, bad, they, room_are all minimal, meaningful, syntactically relevant units, ‘**Boys**’ and ‘**Wanted**’ have two morphemes each remove- s from **boy** and we get a distinct meaningful unit **boy** in other words -s carries the number (singular /plural) different and the similarity, the- **ed** can be removed from **wanted** to change the past tense into present.

It is noteworthy, however, that not all occurrences or examples of morphemes are as straight forward. For example, how do we characterize the- s in **pots**, **keys** and **buses**? This morpheme, known as plural morpheme though has three distinct pronunciations phonetically, clearly has identical meaning in each case (plurality). The grammatical function of- s is equally constant. It would be inappropriate, therefore to assigned each occurrence of- s to different morphemes only on amount of the influence of the sound that proceed them. At least these variants can be describe as allomorphs of the same morpheme. Suffice it to say the process of identifying morpheme ought to ensure that the different occurrences of a morpheme should be recognized as an example of the same morpheme.

Also, sequences of roots can also be homophonous with single morphemes in sentence, consider these: (a) he **rows** the boat (b) they stood in **rows** (c) the flower is a **rose**. All the italicized morphemes though realized the same way /ɔuz/ have different meanings. A morpheme is therefore the smallest unit in the expression system that can be correlated directly with any part of the content.

Comparative Analysis of Morphology and Syntax

Words are formed by combination of morpheme and attempt to analyze them in that manner leads to morphology. Further more words can be grammatically examined with respect to the relationship they hold within phrases, clauses, and sentence. This is referred to as syntax.

Early Distinction of Syntax and Morphology

Positive linguistic wars have so far been fought on the need to explain the mode of interaction between syntax and word formation. As far back as 1960s and early 1970s, disagreement involving the nature of the word formation (WF) component and the lexicon provided background for the emergence of two radically different trend within generative grammar: Generative semantics and lexicalism. The contention lies in the appropriate constructing of the grammar, and whether an independent, list – like, lexicon is more or less costly than an extremely powerful syntax in which transformations could derive varying syntactic and morphological structures from unique semantic representations.

This issue reemerged in the mid-1980s, albeit in a slightly different guise. The corpus of work done during that decade has resulted in important structural insights into the nature of word formation, thus strengthening the claim that morphology is an autonomous module, in consonance with the syntactic modules, and that it should be understood in these terms. Several other works were later done during that same decade which resulted in the emergence of syntactic systems capable of handling word –formation operations in a more restricted way, therefore avoiding many of the pitfalls encountered by earlier, less constrained such work.

Chomsky (1957) viewed syntax as the grammatical sequences of morpheme of a language. Chomsky’s morpheme based theory of syntax has come to adopt, in its most recent development, a rather more traditional view of the complementary of syntax and inflection than it did in its earlier versions. In particular, it now treats derivational morphology as something which is not handled by the central syntactic component of the grammar, but as relating to the structure of the vocabulary (or lexicon). In general, morphology was not held to be a separate field of study. Lees (1960 /1963) are old references but are vital document that attempts to explain word –formation processes in terms of syntactic transformations. For example, a compound such as **man servant** was seen to incorporate the sentence. The **servant is a man**; this sentence by transformation generates the compound. Such a description is naturally highly problematic, especially when confronted with the idiosyncrasies of derived and compound words. Perhaps, this may have prompted Lyons (2005) to submit that it is “inflection” not “morphology that opposes “Syntax” in traditional grammar.

Modern Distinction of Syntax and Morphology

Early transformational grammarians continued the structuralist or traditional form of burning the morphology/syntax division. Highlighting the original but relegated role of syntax in morphology, Adejare and Adejare (2006) refers to syntax as a description of word –order in which grammatical and lexical (Morphological) units are treated together as in Transformational model. The modern distinction of syntax and morphology, according to which syntax deals with the distribution of words

(ie word forms) and morphology with their internal grammatical structure is, at first sight, very similar to the traditional distinction of syntax and inflection. But it differs from it in two respects;

- (a) Morphology includes not only inflection, but also derivation
- (b) It includes both inflection and derivation by means of roles operating upon the same basic units – morphemes (Lyons *ibid*: 103) for example, as the derivation form **teacher** is made up of the two more basic units **teach** and **-er**, so the inflection form **teaching** is made up of the two more basic units (morphemes) **teach** and **-ing**. Furthermore, it is the same process of **affixation**. Ie of adding an affix (either prefix or suffix) to a base form in each case. Looked at from this point of view, morphemes minimal forms- are seen as the basic units of grammatical structure, and a good deal of morphology can be brought within the scope of syntax by denoting the word from its traditional position of centrality in grammatical theory.

Is Morphology Independent of Syntax?

It is within this enhanced understanding of both syntax and word-formation that the same question is now raised; Is word formation an independent module, subject to restrictions all of its own, or should it be subsumed under syntax, obeying syntactic restrictions which are independently motivated? If we assume that word –formation exists as an independent component, how is the interaction between such an independent word –formation component and the syntax be characterized. Borer (2010 reviews very briefly some of the answers that have been given to these two questions in recent studies, pointing out the strengths as well as the weaknesses of these position. In six segments, he surveyed a number of important issues that have emerged in an attempt to model the relationship between word –formation and syntax. He looked exclusively at syntactic and lexicalist models, surveying a number of issues that emerge in each. He showed that the lexical/syntactic distinction interacts with another and as well resolves the issue of isomorphism, which cuts across the lexical/syntactic distinction. He also looked at mixed systems, where solutions to the interaction between morphology and syntax are given in terms of partitioning the morphological component, allowing it to accomplish its task in slightly different ways, depending on the way in which it interacts with the syntax. The obvious conclusion is that from the range of models and possibilities, issues concerning the interaction between word-formation and syntax are not resolved, and they remain sensitive to theoretical contributions to syntactic theory.

The Role of Morphology in Syntax

The role of Morphology in syntax is to mark the agreement information (whether of syntactic or semantic/pragmatic origin) on the element whose form is determined by agreement. Let us illustrate with agreement that is related to number.

I saw two boys

In the above sentence, the morphological role of the inflection –s in the morpheme **boy** is made explicit by the syntactic role of **two** in the noun phrase **two boys**.

The nature of agreement as discussed means that agreement morphology will mark on target information which relates primarily to “controllers”, Note also that the morphological part of agreement need not mirror syntax dependants hence it may agree with their heads, mirroring the syntactic dependency. Conversely, the syntactic head may bear agreement morphology which is controlled by its syntactic dependent, Nichols (1985), Zwicky (1993).

In other words, the agreement “Controller” may be the syntactic dependent. In summary, it is worthwhile to establish that within the morphosyntactic structures of elements within the domain of agreement, different forms can be selected in the agreement process as exemplified below:

The apples and potatoes are ripe

Here we find noun phrases headed by nouns of the same gender, both plural, and the verb takes the same plural form. Now consider phrases headed by non-human plural nouns which are of different genders, but whose subject agreement forms happen to coincide:

The dogs and the plates are there

The gender/ number marker on the verb is that corresponding to all the plural genders. The regularity here is that if noun phrases headed by plural nouns which would take the same target gender form are conjoined, then that “target” gender form will be the preferred form.

The Ways Agreement Links Syntax and Morphology in Determining Meaning in the English Language:

In English, we can say (1a) or (1b)

1 (a) The mother sang for the child.

(b) The mother sang the child a song

However, although we can say (2a).

We can't say (2 b)

2(a) My mum put salt in the stew.

• My mum put the stew in the salt.

And while we can say (3b), we can't say (3a)

3 (a) The boy filled water into his belly

(b)The boy filled his belly with water

Further, we can say (4a) or (4b)

4 (a) Sola broke the glass

(b) The glass broke

Yet, although we can say (5a)

We can't say (5b)

5(a) He fenced his house

(b) * his house fence

Examples such as these raised the question of how participants which are entailed by the lexical meaning of predicates are made explicit in the morpho-syntactic representation, and whether and under what conditions they may remain implicit: that is, where two morphologically related (or even identical). Predicate differ in their lexical semantic and, in particular, in morphology. This facet of the morphology –syntax interface has come to be referred to as “argument structure”.

Conclusion

So far, the writer has traced the relationship between syntax and morphology. He has pinpointed the reformations that take place as well as established the gap that exists in terms of the extent of morphological dependency on syntax. An attempt is also made to clear the air on the subject of morphology agreement. The process is steeped in our appreciation of the role of word-formation in making utterances appear correct and intelligible. It has been largely established that meaning cannot be divorced from syntax or else what will be left will only spell “disagreement” among constituents of sentences.

In this work, an attempt has been made by the writer to establish that hence morphology is the study of the structure of words and syntax in order hands is the study of sentence structure, none can exist or operate without the other. So, words may be grammatically examined with respect to the relationship they hold within phrase, clauses, and sentences. This is referred to the relationship between morphology and syntax in determining meaning in the English Language.

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