Functional word, content word, word, and morphemes

(Vocabulary)

By:

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DISCUSSION

PART I

Functional Words And Content Words

The lexical items are of two kinds: functional words and content words.

The functional words are prepositions, articles, conjunctions, forms indicating number, gender, or tense and pronouns. They are used chiefly to express grammatical functions.

The contents are used to express cultural content and they are consists of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They have more or less independent meanings.

Example:

1. Cats eat fish.
   
   Cats = Noun
   
   Eat = Verb
   
   Fish = Noun

2. My little daughter does not speak English.
   
   My = Preposition
   
   Little = Adverb
   
   Daughter = Noun
   
   Does not = Tense
   
   Speak English = Verb

3. The children went to the zoo happily.
The functional words follow a close system but the content words follow an open system. Thus, the bulk of the English vocabulary consists of the content words, especially nouns, since they keep on increasing in numbers.

**The exercise:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>NOUN</th>
<th>VERB</th>
<th>ADJECTIVE</th>
<th>ADVERB</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
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<td>Smallest</td>
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<td>Purely</td>
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<td>Various</td>
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<td>Combined</td>
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<td>Built</td>
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<td>Difficult</td>
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<td>Matter</td>
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<td>Even</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Words are among the most noticeable units of a language, yet it is extremely difficult to find a general, explicit description of this concept.
that agrees with the judgments made by native speakers of English about which forms are words. In part, this difficult arises from the fact that such judgments are matters of performance, and, therefore, nonlinguistic factors may play a role in the speaker’s determination of words. Yet, underlying this performance is knowledge of the concept ‘words’ as purely linguistic unit.

Summary:
1. The lexical items are of two kinds: functional word and content word.
2. The content words are used to express cultural content and they consist of noun, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.
3. The functional word is used chiefly to express grammatical function.
4. The functional words follow a close system but the content words follow an open system. Thus the bulk of the English vocabulary consists of the content words, especially, nouns.
PART II

Word And Morphemes

A. Morphemes

The morpheme is the smallest meaningful word element. Being the smallest meaningful element, a morpheme cannot be cut into smaller parts and still retains meaning. While a word can occur freely by itself (such as in one word answers), a morpheme may or may not be able to. When a morpheme can occur by itself, it is a word with a single morpheme; but when a morpheme cannot occur by itself, it has to be combined with other morphemes to form a word.

Let’s look at a 6-word sentence from English the word library has three syllables and see how many morphemes it contains: the-word-library-have-s-three-syllable-s.

As can be seen, four of the words the word library three each has only one morpheme. We can’t break it down any of the 4 morphemes any further and still make the parts meaningful. But the two words has and syllables can each be cut into two morphemes. Has consists of have and the third person singular ending –s; syllables contains syllable and the plural ending –s (the two s’s are homophones!). So there are 8 morphemes in all. The following table lists these morphemes, their number of syllables and whether they can be words by themselves:
As we can see, a morpheme can have more than one syllable (e.g., library) or less than one syllable (e.g., -s, -s, the two homophonous morphemes). Therefore, a morpheme cannot be considered the same as a syllable. Another difference between a syllable and a morpheme is that while a morpheme has to be meaningful, a syllable may or may not be. None of the component syllables in the word library and syllable is meaningful. A morpheme also may or may not be a free word. Neither the plural –s nor the 3rd person singular –s is a free word. Hence, a morpheme is not the same as a word. Rather it is a word element.

B. Word

Definition of Word according to Anna Maria Di Sciullo and Edwin Williams

On The Definition of Word develops a consistent and coherent approach to central questions about morphology and its relation to syntax. In sorting out the various senses in which the word word is used, it asserts that three concepts which have often been identified with each other are in fact distinct and not coextensive: listemes (linguistic objects permanently stored by the speaker); morphological objects (objects whose shape can be characterized in morphological terms of affixation and compounding); and syntactic atoms (objects that are unanalyzable units with respect to syntax).
One common definition of word is the following:
A word is any unit of language that is writing, appaears between
spaces or between a spaces and a hyphen.
Examples:

- Matchbox
- Match box
- Match-box

One of the important function of language is to serve as a tool

For one person to convey his or her concepts or meanings to other
person or persons. It is obvious that one very important property of a
word is the meaning it represents. But it is precisely this meaning
bearing function of word that cause problem in attemps to arrive at an
explicit, complete description of the concept word.

Word are very dissimilar in the ways in which they represent
meanings. Look at the following pairs below:

- Text-texbook
- Cat-cats
- Quick-quickly

Word such as text, cat, and quick each conveys a single, quite
specific meaning. A word like textbook, contains two units of
meaning, both of which may occur independently.

It is clear then that words do not always constitute the smallest
meaningful units in a language. Instead words are sometimes
constructed of smaller parts. These smaller part are called
morphemes.
Examples of word

1. trainer
2. trainee
3. training
4. walking
5. protection
6. development
7. impressive
8. involvement
9. kindness
10. sweetest

Summary:
1. Words are among the most noticeable units of a language, yet it is extremely difficult to find a general, explicit description of this concept.
2. Words are not the smallest units of meaning and syntax in a language. An even more basic unit, the morphemes, serves as the element from which words are built.
3. A morpheme is not necessarily a word itself.
4. Morphemes which can occur independently are called free morphemes. The morphemes that cannot occur independently are called bound morphemes.
5. Every free morpheme is a word but not every word is necessarily a free morpheme. (some words contain more than one morpheme).
CONCLUSION

Functional word is the word that is used to express *grammatical functions*. They included among others: preposition, articles, conjunctions, plural, singular, gender, pronoun, and tenses.

Content word is the words that have more or less *independent meanings*. It is used to express cultural content. They consist of noun, verb, adj, adv.

A word is any unit of language that is writing, appaears between spaces or between a spaces and a hyphen.

The morpheme is the *smallest meaningful* word element. Being the smallest meaningful element, a morpheme cannot be cut into smaller parts and still retains meaning.
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