

**THEORETICAL  
GRAMMAR OF THE  
ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

# SUBJECT MATTER OF THEORETICAL GRAMMAR OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Grammar studies principles of word formation, of phrase and sentence construction.

system of segmental and suprasegmental interrelated elements

Theoretical grammar is aimed at analysis of the language system in order to describe different phenomena of the language and explain their uniqueness: semantic and functional aspect.

**GRAMMAR**

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graph TD; A[GRAMMAR] --> B[Morphology]; A --> C[Syntax];
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**Morphology**

studies forms of words and principles of their changing

**Syntax**

studies principles of phrase and sentence construction

# THE SYSTEM OF LANGUAGE STUDY

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Language incorporates **the three constituent systems:**

- **phonological**
- **lexical**
- **grammatical**

Any linguistic description may have a **practical** or **theoretical** purpose.

# Grammatical category. Grammatical meaning.

## Grammatical form

A **grammatical category** is a unit of grammar based on a morphological opposition of grammatical meanings presented in grammatical forms.

The 2 main types of meaning that are readily observed are the grammatical and the lexical meanings to be found in words and word-forms.

**Grammatical meanings** are very abstract and general

**Grammatical forms** can be morphemes, synthetic forms, and grammatical word combinations.

Synthetic forms – unity of both lexical and grammatical meanings in one word.

In analytical forms there two or more words in which at least one element is an auxiliary.

The grammatical category of gender is practically lost in English e.g.

**“waiter vs. waitress”**

That distinction is not universal enough to build up a grammatical category

**book and books**

**-s** is a form-building morpheme that builds a grammatical form

## Types of word-form derivation:

**(a)** those limited to changes in the body of the word, without having recourse to auxiliary words (**synthetic types**);

**(b)** those implying the use of auxiliary words (**analytical types**). These consist in using a word (devoid of any lexical meaning of its own) to express some grammatical category of another word.

e.g. **has** visited / **is** invited / **does** not invite

# Suppletive Formations

Means building a form of a word from an altogether different stem

***Go – went***

***I – me***

***Good – better***

suppletive formations are a very insignificant element, but they comprise a few very widely used words among adjectives, pronouns, and verbs.

# Theory of oppositions. Types of oppositions.

## Oppositions in morphology

Generalized correlation of lingual forms by means of which a certain function is expressed. The correlated elements (members) of the opposition must possess two types of features: common features and differential features.

Qualitative types of oppositions established in phonology:

**privative, gradual, and equipollent.**

By the number of members contrasted, oppositions were divided into binary and more than binary



## **Binary privative opposition**

is formed by a contrastive pair of members in which one member is characterized by the presence of a certain differential feature (strong, marked, positive), while the other member is characterized by the absence of the feature (weak, unmarked, negative).

Eg. voiced vs. devoiced consonants

## **Gradual opposition**

is formed by a contrastive group of members which are distinguished not by the presence or absence of a feature, but by the degree of it

## **Equipollent opposition**

is formed by a contrastive pair or group in which the members are distinguished by different positive features

# **privative morphological opposition**

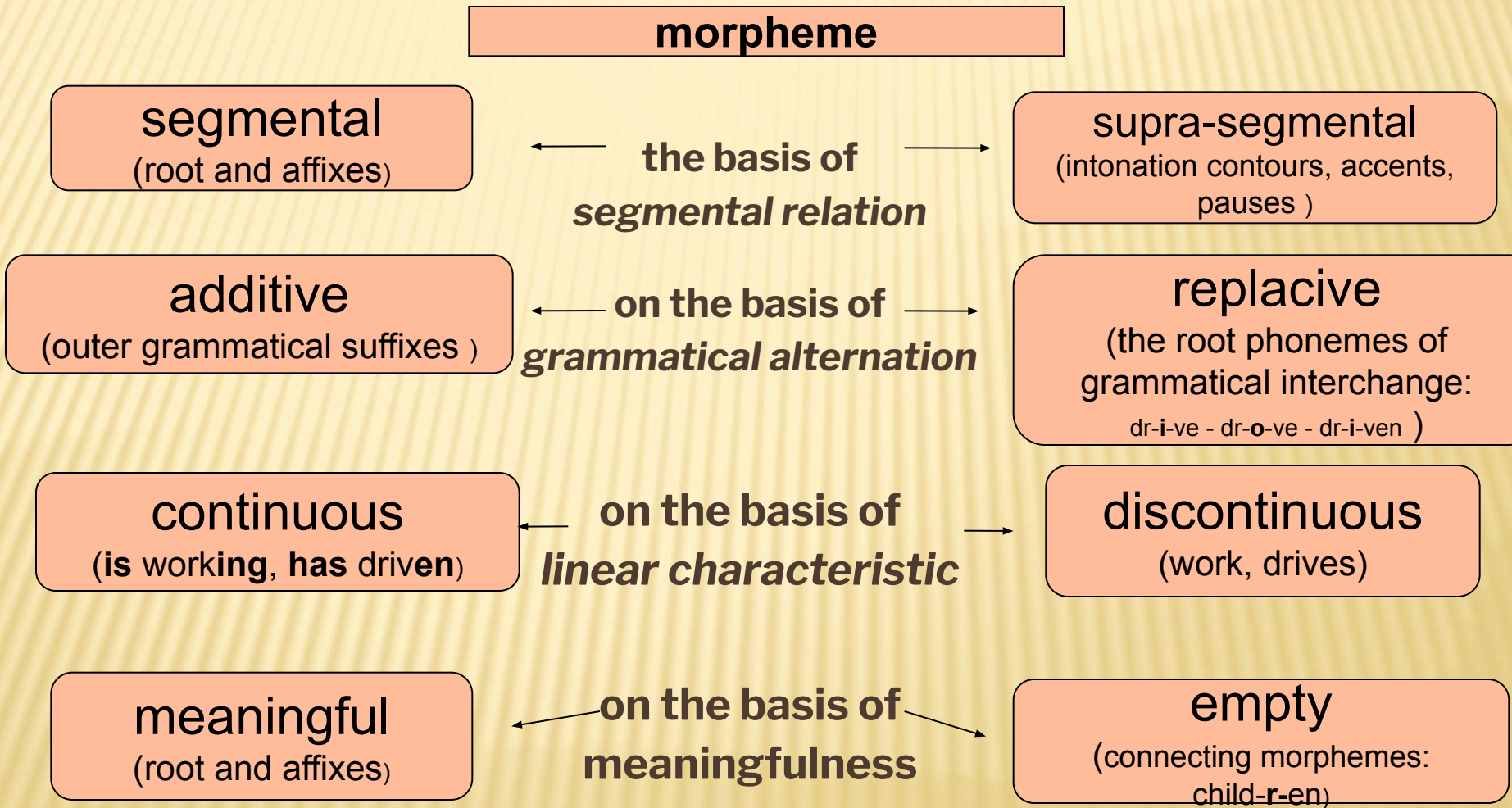
is based on a morphological differential feature which is present in its strong member and absent in its weak member (eg. present – past).

**reduction of oppositions.**

**neutralization.**

**transposition**

# MORPHEMIC STRUCTURE OF A WORD



# Morpheme. Derivation morphemes and inflection morphemes

Most word-forming morphemes are ambiguous.

**Morpheme** is defined as the smallest meaningful units into which a word form may be divided.

*Writers :*

*writ + er + s*

*Advantageously :*

*advantage + ous + ly,*

**homonyms.**

**zero morphemes**

**derivation morphemes**

**Inflection morphemes**

# **Distributional analysis. Morphemic analysis. IC-analysis**

**Distribution** is the occurrence of a lexical unit relative to other lexical units of the same level (words relative to words / morphemes relative to morphemes).

In the distributional analysis at the morphemic level, phonemic distribution of morphemes and morphemic distribution of morphemes are discriminated.

Contrastive and non-contrastive distribution concern identical environments of different morphs.

The morphemic analysis is a process of singling out morphs in a word and stating their meaning.

# The theory of Immediate Constituents (IC)

was originally elaborated as an attempt to determine the ways in which lexical units are relevantly related to one another. It was discovered that combinations of such units are usually structured into hierarchically arranged sets of binary constructions. For example:

***a black dress in severe style***

The fundamental aim of IC analysis is to segment a set of lexical units into two maximally independent sequences

successive segmentation results in Ultimate Constituents (UC)

***a | black | dress | in | severe | style***

***fat major's wife***

# **The Parts of Speech Problem. Grammatical Classes of Words**

There are four approaches to the problem:

1. Classical, or logical-inflectional, worked out by prescriptivists.
2. Functional, worked out by descriptivists
3. Distributional, worked out by structuralists
4. Complex.

# The Principles of Classification as Used by Prescriptive Grammarians

Words in English were divided into **declinables** (nouns, adjectives, pronouns, verbs, participles) and **indeclinables** (adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, interjections, articles).

The underlying principle of classification was **form**, which, as can be seen from their treatment of the English noun, was not only morphologic but also syntactic, i.e. if it was form in Latin, it had to be form in English.