

## Re: stem or root?

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- *From:* Nathan Sanders <[nsanders@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:nsanders@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)>
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In article <4lj1vkF258ckU1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Harlan Messinger <[hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

Nathan Sanders wrote:

In article <Pine.LNX.4.63.0608291413380.2325@xx>, Helmut Richter <[hhr-m@xxxxxx](mailto:hhr-m@xxxxxx)> wrote:

Besides their more special meanings, the words "stem" and "root" are both used to denote the core part of a word to which affixes are attached. Are the two words synonymous in this context?

In the German language, there are many words that look as if they had an affix (mostly a suffix) but this affix appears in each cognate word, e.g. "Wagen" with the suffix "-en", but all not to distant cognates contain the n of the suffix, e.g. "Wagner". The "-(e)n" thus belongs to the word itself and is not an \*additional\* affix. Would one say that it is part of the root? Or that it is part of the word stem?

Without being sure about the correct terminology, I would consider it part of the root but not part of the stem, but I want to check whether my terminology is correct in this point.

A root is the innermost morpheme of a word (no affixes) that carries the primary lexical content of the word, while a stem is a root or stem plus an affix (thus, each affix creates a new stem).

Re: stem or root?

The inflectional stem is specifically the stem that consists of the root plus all and only the derivational affixes in the word. Many people use "stem" to refer only to the inflectional stem.

In your example, "Wag" would be the root (and perhaps a zero-derived stem, if inflectional affixes can be added to it alone), while "Wagen" is a stem.

But "en" in "Wagen" isn't an affix. The fact that it reduces to "n" in "Wagner" isn't different from the "y" in "city" changing to "ie" in "cities", and the "y" certainly isn't an affix.

Oops, sorry, I completely misunderstood your example. In that case, "Wag(e)n" is both a root and a suffix. "Wag" is nothing, unless it appears in another word without