

Grammar terms beginning with letter F

False friend

A word in a foreign language which looks very much like a word in your own language but which has a very different meaning.

Finite verb

A label applied to a verb-form which is marked for tense. A finite verb has the marking -s in the simple present tense. Note that this happens only when the subject is in the third person singular.

So for example in James works, the verb-form works is finite. In the past tense, tense is marked either by the ending -ed or by a change in the inner vowels of the verb.

Foreign plural

A plural form which has been imported directly from a foreign language. English has dozens of foreign plurals. Examples include radii (plural of radius) and phenomena (plural of phenomenon).

Foreign plurals often confuse English-speakers because they may have difficulty remembering which form is the singular and which is the plural.

Free morpheme

A morpheme which can stand alone to make a word all by itself. For example, the English verb happy is a free morpheme because it can stand alone. A free morpheme may sometimes combine with other morphemes in a larger word. For example, happy can combine with the morpheme un to form the larger word unhappy.