Engineers develop computer that talks

(Continued from page 1) understand at least ten times that number of words.

"The morph lexicon within our computer includes... all the commonly known prefixes, suffixes, and Latin roots," said Allen.

Although programming these morphs into the computer was a relatively simple task, engineers came up against immense problems in breaking words down into the correct sets of chunks. For instance, morphs often change when they are incorporated into words: "pit" becomes "pitting," gaining a "t"; "choke" loses an "e" to become "choking." To overcome these difficulties, Professor of Electrical Engineering Francis Lee developed a complicated set of rules which enable the computer to break a word down properly.

Although Allen still wants to develop this talking computer into a reading machine for the blind, he also sees many other uses for the computer.

A major use of the machine could be in computer output; a library user would telephone the computer and hear what information it has to offer. The machine could also be very valuable in computer-aided instruction, such as teaching children to read. Allen and his associates realize that they will have to make substantial progress before this computer can analyze entire sentences and speak them naturally.