



■ **Figure 10.1:** An analysis of a simple English sentence. As this example shows, verbal language has a hierarchical structure. At the base of the hierarchy are the phonemes, which are units of vocal sound that do not, in themselves, have meaning. The smallest units of meaning in a language are morphemes, which include not only root words but also such meaning-carrying units as the past-tense suffix *-ed* and the plural *-s*. Complex rules of syntax govern how the words constructed from morphemes may be combined into phrases and phrases may be combined into meaningful statements, or sentences.