Words and meanings

What is a word?

1. Which of these do you consider to be words?

		Word? ✔ ✘	
1	*isn't*		
2	*singing*		
3	*self-confident*		
4	*the black sheep of the family*		
5	*to and fro*		
6	*Stoke-on-Trent*		
7	*re-enlist*		
8	*washing machine*		
9	*grrpflikwards*		
10	*floccinaucinihilipilification*		

How did you decide?

2. Here are some rules for defining what a word is. What problems do you have applying the rules to the examples?

Rule a.   Words are the smallest meaningful units of speech.

Rule b.   People pause between words.

Rule c.   You can't add anything into words, only to the spaces between words.

Rule d.   Words are units of meaning.

Rule e.   Words are collections of letters with a gap or punctuation mark at each end.

Examples:

a. *Dunno*

b. *Wotcha!*

c. *at*

d. *gaslight*

e. *e.g.*

f. *absobloodylutely*

g. *give me the psdangbriggwrml*

h. *ain't*

Right, that's why we use the word lexeme. A lexeme is:

> *a basic lexical unit of a language consisting of one word or several words, the elements of which do not separately convey the meaning of the whole*

3. So, by this definition of a lexeme, which of the ten examples in Task 1 count as lexemes?

		Lexeme? ✔ ✘	
1	*isn't*		
2	*singing*		
3	*self-confident*		
4	*the black sheep of the family*		
5	*to and fro*		
6	*Stoke-on-Trent*		
7	*re-enlist*		
8	*washing machine*		
9	*grrpflikwards*		
10	*floccinaucinihilipilification*		