

## ASSIGNMENT ABOUT LANGUAGE X (BASED ON EXPLORATORY EXERCISE CH.3 IN H&S)<sup>1</sup>

### Assignment I, Chapter 3, Morphological rules

- This assignment must be handed in via Canvas and will be graded.
- Your report should be maximally 1000 words.
- In class, there will be group discussions on language diversity and the overall issue of generalizations vs. exceptions.

#### Intro/background:

One issue that was not addressed in chapter 3 is whether morphological rules ever fail to apply. We implied that morphological rules apply to all and only the bases that meet the conditions for a given rule, and linguists strive to formulate rules for which this is true. But is it always possible to write rules that are this efficient? In other words, how common are exceptions? The goals of this exercise are to practice writing morphological rules using word-schemas and morphological correspondences, and to think about problems raised by exceptions.

#### Instructions:

- Step 1: Make an inventory of the morphological patterns used for plural formation of nouns in your Language X.  
**N.B.** If your Language X has a lot of inflectional morphology on nouns, look only at a particular case-form (e.g. accusative for Latin, genitive for Serbo-Croatian). For Swedish and Norwegian, focus only on the indefinite plural.  
**N.B.** If you are studying NGT, you may use the article by Nijhof & Zwitserlood (1999) on Canvas.
- Step 2: Gather examples of each pattern. Build lists of 10 examples for each pattern. You can either use a descriptive grammar of your Language X, or – if one is available – a dictionary that gives inflectional information, and record all of the relevant examples on every 10<sup>th</sup> (20<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> etc.) page. Of course, you can also use examples from course materials from semester 1.
- Step 3: Write morphological rules in the form of word-schemas and morphological correspondences (see H&S chapter 3.2) to describe each morphological pattern/group of examples. Be as specific as possible. The goal is for the schemas to subsume a maximal number of word-forms that follow the rule and to exclude all the word-forms that do not. Remember: there is no rigid formula for a good analysis; just try to get an optimal result.
- Step 4: Ponder the implications of any exceptions to your rules.
  - How many exceptions can accrue before they cannot be considered idiosyncratic anymore, but instead warrant a separate rule-governed pattern? Explain your reasoning.
  - How might additional data help you to decide? E.g. How would you expect new words or borrowings to behave in terms of plural formation? Explain your answer.

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. The assignments are adapted versions of the exploratory assignments in Haspelmath & Sims – please, do NOT use the assignments in the book, but stick to these adapted versions!