Morphology
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Assignment I

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The following is a morphological analysis of plural formation in the Dutch language. While for the most part, Dutch plurals can be divided among two main categories, for each of these, and the two categories as a whole, there exist exceptions. Theory and examples are taken from Geerts [1984] and Oosterhoff [2015].

Plurals ending with *-en*

The main pluralisation paradigm in Dutch uses the suffix *-en* to that a noun is in plural form. The difficulty is that there is no general way to characterise words that belong to this class of nouns. As Oosterhoff [2015] describes it, a noun belongs to this class, if it does not belong to any of the exceptional classes.

The following are some examples of nouns that undergo this morphological process:

• *boek*	*boeken*
• *kaart*	*kaarten*
• *mouw*	*mouwen*
• *boom*	*bomen*
• *deur*	*deuren*
• *leerling*	*leerlingen*
• *plant*	*planten*
• *groep*	*groepen*
• *bloem*	*bloemen*
• *verwarming*	*verwarmingen*

Word-schema

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\mathrm{X}/_{\mathrm{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\mathrm{X}/_{\mathrm{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\mathrm{X}\textsc{en}/_{\mathrm{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Voicing of the final-obstruent

In Dutch when any of the sounds [d, v, z] is in word-final position, it is converted into it's voiceless counterpart—[t, f, s] respectively—through a phonological process. Because through the pluralisation using the suffix *-en* in Dutch, some of these final-obstruents in the singular form of the word will lose their word-final position. Therefore, these consonants won't undergo devoicing, and thus will not be realised as a voiceless obstruent, but as the original voiced underlying form.

- *hand* *handen*
- *rand* *randen*
- *mand* *manden*
- *tand* *tanden*
- *druif* *druiven*
- *prijs* *prijzen*
- *wolf* *wolven*
- *laars* *laarzen*
- *hals* *halzen*
- *scherf* *scherven*

Word-schema

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xt}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xf}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xs}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xt}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xd}\textipa{@}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xf}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xv}\textipa{@}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xs}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xz}\textipa{@}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Vowel modification

One last important exception to the general *-en* paradigm, and one of the few non-purely concatenative pluralisation processes is that where the short vowels [ɑ, ɔ, ɛ] in front of the final consonant are replaced by [aː, oː, eː] respectively.

- *bad* *baden*
- *dag* *dagen*
- *gat* *gaten*
- *glas* *glazen*
- *graf* *graven*
- *vat* *vaten*

Word-schema

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\alpha\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\mathrm{ɔ}\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\varepsilon\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\alpha\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xa}\mathrm{ː}\text{C}\mathrm{ə}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of }x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\mathrm{ɔ}\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xvo}\mathrm{ː}\text{C}\mathrm{ə}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of }x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\varepsilon\text{C}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xze}\mathrm{ː}\text{C}\mathrm{ə}\text{n}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of }x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Plurals ending with *-s*

The second of the two pluralisation paradigms in Dutch corresponds to the nouns with the pluralisation suffix *-s*.

Vowel ending

The larges class of words that are pluralised using the *-s* suffix are those ending in a vowel sound.

- *dia* *dia's*
- *agenda* *agenda's*
- *auto* *auto's*
- *taxi* *taxi's*
- *paraplu* *paraplu's*
- *baby* *baby*
- *vakantie* *vakanties*
- *garage* *garages*
- *editie* *edities*
- *spatie* *spaties*

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{XV}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{XV}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{XVs}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Diminutives

Another large, and completely regular, group of nouns using the *-s* suffix for pluralisation are the diminutive forms of nouns. In Dutch, all diminutives, which are nouns usually sufficed with *-je*, are pluralised this way.

- *boekje* *boekjes*
- *kaartje* *kaartjes*
- *mouwtje* *mouwtjes*
- *boompje* *boompjes*
- *deurtje* *deurtjes*
- *prijsje* *prijsjes*
- *wolfje* *wolfjes*
- *laarsje* *laarsjes*
- *halsje* *halsjes*
- *scherfje* *scherfjes*

Word-schema

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{j}\text{ɜ}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{’} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{j}\text{ɜ}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{’} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{j}\text{ɜ}\text{s}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘plural of }x\text{s’} \end{bmatrix}$$

Special cases

Apart from the pluralisation using the *-en* and *-s* suffix, there exist some more ways of marking the plural in Dutch.

Latin loanwords

While not a significant class of nouns in terms of frequency, the Latin loanwords present in Dutch of an exception to the general pluralisation rules, which still has a large degree of regularity. Dutch largely borrowed the plural forms from the original language, and as such retains the rules that existed in said language.

- *museum* *musea*
- *practicum* *practica*
- *index* *indices*
- *collega* *collegae*

Word-schema

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{ʏ}\text{m}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{a}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{ɛ}\text{k}\text{s}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix}$$

Morphological correspondence

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{ʏ}\text{m}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{a}\text{ː}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘plural of }x\text{s (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{a}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\text{e}\text{ː}/\text{N} \\ \text{‘plural of }x\text{s (= Latin loanword)’} \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} /\text{X}\varepsilon\text{ks}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`}x\text{ (= Latin loanword)'} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} /\text{Xi:s}\varepsilon\text{s}/_{\text{N}} \\ \text{`plural of } x\text{s (= Latin loanword)'} \end{bmatrix}$$

Plurals ending with *-eren* - Double plurals

This last special case contains the words which have so called double plurals—or *stapelmeervouden* in Dutch. Some examples of these words are shown below. The main explanation for this irregular suffix, and also the reason why they are called double plurals, is because they both exhibit the original plural suffix—usually as loaned from Old German—and the current Dutch plural marking *-en*.

In the case of *kind* for example, the original plural form was *kinder* (similar to the german *'Kind' 'Kinder'*).

The reasons for this discrepancy are largely arbitrary—usually when people start using the plural as if it were a singular form—and it's therefore difficult to express these exceptions in some generalised morphological rule.

- *kind* *kinderen*
- *kalf* *kalveren*
- *ei* *eieren*
- *lied* *liederen*

Further exceptions

The question whether an exception is purely idiosyncratic or whether it is based on some generalisable rule is one which I believe can't be answered purely by frequency of occurrence. Obviously, frequency does play a part in trying to analyse such exceptions. If only one word in the entire language has a certain property, it might be governed by a rule, but whether or not it is won't really make a difference in this case. On the other hand, if a large number of words exhibits a certain characteristic, it might be plausible that this is caused by a certain rule.

Apart from this frequency aspect however, I'd like to pose that regularity of the occurrence also plays a big role in determinig whether a rule exists. A good example of the balance between these factors are the two last exceptions I've explained above. The first with the Latin loanwords shows a relatively small class of words, so the frequency of occurrence in the language is low, but due to the high regularity of the system, it is easy for those using and analysing the language to form general rules explaining the pluralisation process.

The other example, with the double plurals, shows a class of nouns, comparable in size to the Latin loanwords, which has a low degree of observable regularity. As such, formulating a rule is difficult, and users of the language are forced to recall these plural forms based on lexical knowledge.

The access to more data would help the process of rule formalisation, as more data would allow those analysing to better see any pattern present in the processes observed.

How new and loanwords would function when it comes to pluralisation really depends on the circumstances I believe. In the case of completely new words, I'd think that these would follow the most regular processes already present in the language. This is easier to come up with, and makes it easier to use the new word. In case of a loanword, this could go both ways. The loanword could adopt the borrowing language's system, like English words in Dutch, or the original language's system could be borrowed, like the earlier mentioned Latin loanwords in Dutch.

References

G. Geerts. *Algemene Nederlandse spraakkunst*. Wolters-Noordhoff, 1984. ISBN 9789001334963.

Jenneke A. Oosterhoff. *Modern Dutch grammar: a practical guide*. Routledge, 2015.