

Tying Up Loose Ends for the Midterm

Nir Segal – November 7, 2025

Generalizing the RHHR & The Category of Derivational Suffixes

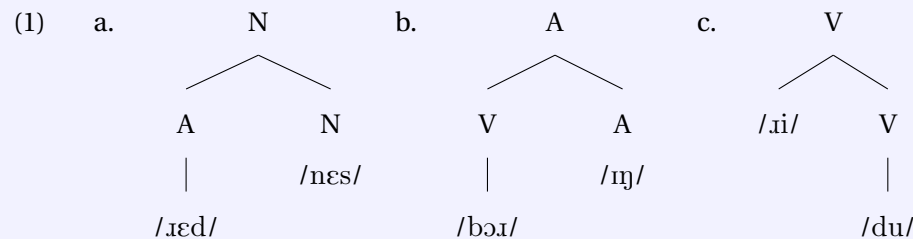
The right hand head rule (RHHR)

The category of a compound* is identical to the category of its head, which is always the rightmost element of the compound.

$$X \rightarrow Y + X$$

We can generalize the RHHR to include *suffixes*: The category of an English word is the category of its right-most morpheme *that has a category* (i.e., its head)

- For that definition to work, we'll assume that derivational suffixes have a category! (while inflectional suffixes don't)



*A note about compounds: Every element of a compound must be a word of English

Practice

- (2) For the following words: (i) Show how they are composed from smaller morphemes by using our 'tree notation' (ii) Say what their heads are.
- foolishness
 - unfollows
 - dancers

Morpho-phonology

In the lectures, you analyzed the past tense suffix in English.

[p ^h leɪ]	'play'	[p ^h leɪd]	'played'
[mab]	'mob'	[mabd]	'mobbed'
[jɛl]	'my house'	[jɛld]	'yelled'
[fowld]	'fold'	[fowldɪd]	'folded'
[bowlt]	'bolt'	[bowltɪd]	'bolted'
[p ^h æs]	'pass'	[p ^h æst]	'passed'
[map]	'mop'	[mapt]	'mopped'
[lak]	'lock'	[lakt]	'locked'

We ended up with the following rules: The morpheme /d/ is realized as

- the allomorph [ɪd] after alveolar stops;
- the allomorph [t] after voiceless (non-alveolar-stop) consonants;
- the allomorph [d] elsewhere.

There is a reason why this morpho-phonological process applies in English: it repairs *codas* that are otherwise phonotactically illicit.

- [maɪndd]
- [bowltɪd]
- [mapd]

Cumulative Practice

(3) Please show how our syllabification algorithm would syllabify this made-up word: [p.rʊtʃɪk.lʊɪ.ləs]

(4) Consider the following data from Russian (Slavic; Russia).

[aʲt]	‘viola’	[pʲatʲ]	‘five’
[tak]	‘so’	[dʲadʲə]	‘uncle’
[matʲ]	‘mother’	[mʲatʲ]	‘to crumple’
[daɫ]	‘he gave’	[vaɟ]	‘your (pl.)’
[trʌvʌ]	‘grass’	[zʲatʲ]	‘son-in-law’

- Do [pʲ] and [zʲ] contrast in Russian? Why? What does it tell us about those two phones?
- Do [a] and [aʲ] contrast in Russian? Why?
- If they don't contrast, determine phoneme and provide the conditioning phonetic context for the allophones (form a formal rule as well).

Note: [•ʲ] is the notation for a **palatalized consonant**.

(5) Consider the following data from Ganda (Bantu; East Africa).

[okugula]	‘to buy’	[efirimbi]	‘whistle’
[okuleɾta]	‘to bring’	[erina]	‘name’
[okutabaɾla]	‘to attach’	[ettu:ndiro]	‘shop’
[leɾwe]	‘railway’	[luɾla]	‘ruler’
[omulala]	‘mad man’	[myere:re]	‘only’
[naɾlwɑ:na]	‘fought’	[okuli:ro]	‘to eat with’
[ebendera]	‘banderol’	[safa:li]	‘safari’
[tule:ga]	‘we tighten’	[olugero]	‘story’

- Are [l] and [r] allophones of the same phoneme or allophones of different phonemes? For the first option, state what the phoneme is and the conditioning phonetic context for the allophones (form a formal rule as well); for the second option, provide a minimal pair.

(6) The Dutch diminutive has several allomorphs. Determine what they are, and explain their distribution (provide rules, etc.).

[prœim]	‘plum’	[prœimpjə]
[lɪxɑ:m]	‘body’	[lɪxɑ:mpjə]
[be:zəm]	‘broom’	[be:zəmpjə]
[ko:nɪŋ]	‘king’	[ko:nɪŋkjə]
[fiɑ:riŋ]	‘herring’	[fiɑ:riŋkjə]
[stre:p]	‘stripe’	[stre:pjə]
[dif]	‘theif’	[difjə]
[ɑlma:nɑk]	‘almanac’	[ɑlma:nɑkjə]
[vɛ:rəɫt]	‘world’	[vɛ:rəɫtjə]
[dax]	‘day’	[daxjə]
[nø:s]	‘nose’	[nø:sjə]
[ba:na:n]	‘banana’	[ba:na:nʔɛə]
[kœyl]	‘hole’	[kœylʔɛə]
[altɑ:r]	‘altar’	[altɑ:rʔɛə]
[ɛi]	‘egg’	[ɛiʔɛə]
[kø:]	‘cue (for playing billiards)’	[kø:ʔɛə]

Now consider the following additional data. How does it affect your previous analysis?

[kam]	‘comb’	[kaməʔɛə]
[snɔ:r]	‘moustache’	[snɔ:rəʔɛə]
[fiɔ:tɛl]	‘hotel’	[fiɔ:tɛləʔɛə]
[fiɔ:rɪzən]	‘horizon’	[fiɔ:rɪzənəʔɛə]