Handout 4

On the productivity of a concatenative system:

Haspelmath and Sims p. 115-119, 122-129

Questions of restrictedness:

What are some rules that determine whether a certain prefix or suffix is productive?

Think of the causative suffix '-en' as in widen and lengthen.

What is the rule here?

What makes it so that this suffix is unable to attach to adjectives which end with a sonorant?

(you can fatten but not slimmen).

This suffix is said to operate on monosyllabic adjectives ending with an obstruent, but there is no verb *hotten, even though 'hot' is a monosyllabic adjective ending with an obstruent. The restriction on its productivity is thus more than what the rule reveals to us.

Restrictions on productivity may be phonological, as in the causative example above.

Can you think of other phonological restrictions on the productivity of a certain morpheme?

Semantic restrictions are also said to take a toll on a morpheme's productivity. The prefix 'un-' with the meaning of reversing the effect of a certain verb can virtually be added to any verb, but what about verbs that cannot be reversed? Can you possibly unknock on a door?

What about untouching someone (cf. Adam Levine's song unkiss me)? Is there a distinction between "real" productivity and "poetic license"?

English has borrowed a multitude of words and affixes from Latin. Some of these affixes still exclusively attach to Latin words, like the adejctival suffix '-al' (think dental and not toothal, where 'dent-' is the Latin stem for 'tooth'), while some other affixes lost this distinction and can freely attach to any stem/root, whether it be Latin or Germanic.

What keeps this Latin/Germanic distinction **consciously** alive in Modern English?

Think of the adjectival '-ly'. The restriction on the usage of this suffix comes not from the suffix per se, but rather from the limited set of nouns it can attach to. This is because most nouns form their adjectival counterparts with a different suffix.

In the case of adverbial '-ly' vs. adjectival '-ly', are we dealing with syncretism or allomorphy? I.e. is this the same morpheme serving two different functions, or are they to be considered two different morphemes?

Brush over sections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2 p. 123-126

We will not be discussing analogical extension, but let us briefly consider some examples:

think of hang hung and hang hanged. same word or different origins?

Measuring productivity? Can we quantify it? And if we can, should we?

Bauer p.75

Lexicalist or transformational?

The question about productivity becomes especially concerning in light of Chomsky 1970.

The lexicalist position maintains that complex words (think decision from decide + -(s)ion) are stored as their own units in the lexicon (our mental dictionary). The transformational position, on the other hand, argues that the lexicon contains only the simplex (most basic) lexical units, in this case 'decide', and the noun derived therefrom, i.e. 'decision' is the result of an operation in the morphology of the language that says 'decide' simplex verb + -(s)ion deverbal nominalizer = 'decision'.

These two seemingly antithetical positions share the notion of the lexicon.

Which position do you favor and why? Do you think there is one operation happening at the transformational level, i.e. the addition of a suffix, or is it two? What of the apparent surface spirantization of the final consonant here? Can you think of other examples in English or in Hungarian?

On the productivity of a non-concatenative system:

Ratcliffe p.23, 26

The question of productivity in a non-concatenative morphology is twofold. First, we must examine root productivity as well as template productivity.

Let us take some basic Lebanese Arabic templates:

1. Form I: $C_1aC_2aC_3$ or $C_1iC_2iC_3$
2. Form II: $C_1aC_2C_2aC_3$
3. Active participle (agentive noun) of form I: $C_1\bar{a}C_2iC3$ or $C_1\bar{e}C_2iC_3$
4. Form X: $staC_1C_2aC_3$
5. Passive: $nC_1aC_2aC_3$
6. Passive participle (patient/theme) of form I: $maC_1C_2\bar{u}C_3$

Each template has a 'fixed' meaning. (1) is a basic verb, with no added semantic meaning or layers to it. The first pattern in (1) usually describes transitive or unaccusative verbs. The second pattern describes unergative verbs or personal datives.

(2) is usually either a causative or an intensive verb depending on form I's semantics.

(4) is an 'estimative' verb. This means that this verb template expresses a speaker's estimation or opinion about something.

The first issue to be tackled here is the notion of the morpheme. If these templates are considered to be made up of morphemes, how exactly do we locate the constituents?

McCarthy's autosegmental phonology gives us a hint into this kind of segmentation, where the constituents are separated into different tiers.

The main idea is still that words are 'boiled down' to their basic root radicals or consonants. If we do this, then McCarthy's "vowel tier" may be considered the equivalent of a morpheme.

After successfully describing what is to be segmented and categorized as morphemes, it becomes clearer that templates are the equivalent of affixes in a concatenative system.

Roots, then, should be considered the equivalent of bases or stems.

Let us take some triconsonantal roots and project them unto the 6 aforementioned templates:

a. k-s-r ‘related to breaking’
b. ʔ-t-l ‘related to killing’
c. ʔ-ʕ-d ‘related to sitting’
d. š-b-ʕ ‘related to saturation’
e. k-t-r ‘related to (big) quantity’

For each root, we will try to see which templates exist.

Table 1

Template / Root	Form I	Form II	Active Participle	Form X	Passive	Passive Participle
k-s-r ‘related to breaking’	Kasar ‘to break’	Kassar ‘to break into pieces (intensive)’	ʔkēsir	*staksar	Nkasar ‘to get broken’	maksūr ‘broken’
ʔ-t-l ‘related to killing’	ʔatal ‘to kill’ ʔitil ‘to waste away; die’	ʔattal ‘to massacre, i.e. kill intensively’	ʔātil ‘killer’	staʔtal ‘to try hard obtaining something’	nʔatal ‘to be killed’	maʔtūl ‘murdered person’
ʔ-ʕ-d ‘related to sitting’	ʔaʕad ‘to sit’ ʔiʕid ‘to sit’	ʔaʕʕad ‘to make someone sit’	ʔēʕid ‘sitting (participle)	*staʔʕad	ʔnʔaʕad	*maʔʕūd
š-b-ʕ ‘related to saturation’	šibiʕ ‘to be satisfied’	šabbaʕ ‘to saturate’	*šēbiʕ	*stašbaʕ	ʔnšabaʕ	*mašbūʕ

As table 1 shows, gaps exist across paradigms. Some gaps may be explained away by their valence, i.e. being unpassivizable because the verb’s arguments are less than what is required for passivization. However, some gaps seem to be arbitrary, as in those missing in form X.

Perhaps a more stark example of the arbitrariness of these gaps is the missing active participle for ‘k-s-r’ where ‘ʔkēsir’ would mean ‘breaker’. The reason this word is not completely ungrammatical is its presence with some objects like ‘lṣaḥen’ ‘the plate’, where this participle yields a sort of verbal meaning rather than an agentive one. Nonetheless, the missing active participle for ‘š-b-ʕ’ ‘related to saturation’ is also

peculiar, since there is no semantic problem with conceiving of the notion of a ‘satisfier’, yet it does not really exist in the Lebanese Arabic paradigm.

Question: What makes form II uniformly productive?

Look at templates (1) and (3). Which one is a case of allomorphy?

Why is form I sometimes realized with an ‘a-a’ melody and other times with an ‘i-i’ one?