

Homework Assignment III (cont'd)
Due: Friday, March 9 (beginning of class)

1. *English Plurals*

So far we have assumed that English has just one plural morpheme (apart from the irregular forms), we've called it *-s*. Upon closer inspection we find that there are actually three allomorphs of this morpheme: [z], [s], and [ɪz].

Your task on this homework is to come up with a little rule system that can model how English speakers might form the plural form of any given noun root.

The first step is to identify what the environments are in which the allomorphs occur. To do that, sort the following roots into four lists – a list of roots that take the [z] allomorph, one of roots that take the [s] allomorph, one of [ɪz]-taking roots, and one of roots that works differently (i.e. irregulars).

List of roots:

goose, cat, dog, house, bear, deer, group, rock, bus, child, garage, bush, match, lamb, hen, ring, pill, ox, box, laugh_N, love_N

Roots that take [z]: [ber], [dag], [rɪŋ], [hɛn], [pɪl], [læm], [lʌv]

f.i. [dag] – [dagz], etc.

Roots that take [s]: [kæt], [rɒk], [grʊp], [lɑːf]

f.i. [kæt] – [kæts], etc.

Roots that take [ɪz]: [hɑːs], [bʌs], [gəʀɑːz], [bʊʃ], [mæʃɪ], [bʌks]

f.i. [gəʀɑːz] – [gəʀɑːzɪz], etc.

Irregulars:

[gʊs] ([gɪs]), [dɪr] ([dɪr]), [fɪˈaɪld] ([fɪˈɪldrən]), [ɒx] ([ɒxən])

(The irregular plural 'oxen' of 'ox' is what I've learned in my high school English class. Many of you guys seem to agree that 'oxes' is perfectly ok – either one should work with the system you come up with in the end.)

The roots that take the [ɪz] allomorph share the following property:

The roots that take the [z] allomorph share the following property:

The roots that take the [s] allomorph share the following property:

Lastly, let's put everything together: To form the plural form of a English noun root, do the following (Watch out for the order in which you proceed and test your rule):

Check if the root _____ . If so _____

_____ . If not, check if the root _____

_____ . If so use the _____ allomorph. If not, check if the root _____

_____ . If so use the _____ allomorph,

otherwise use the _____ allomorph.

Show, step by step, how your rule works for one example of each of the four categories (irregular, [ɪz], [z], [s]):

irregular:

[ɪz]:

[z]:

[s]: