The Homework Maker’s Notes

Many acknowledgements to my mom for helping me with my data. She is not a native Hungarian speaker, but has studied it intensely, and lived with our relatives in Hungary for several years (and talks to them as much as she can). I double checked all of the forms, and to the best of my knowledge, the forms I present in the problem are accurate.

I. PLURALS

Part A

It looks like the Hungarian plural morpheme is the suffix [-k]. It’s also interesting that in roots that end with a low vowel ([e] or [a]), the vowel becomes lengthened, as we can see in (1).

(1) a. alma → almák
    b. csiga → csigák

There are a few cases where we see long non-low vowels in the plural form, but only when it was present in the singular form:

(2) a. fiú → fiúk
    b. kapu → kapuk

It is not yet clear whether this low vowel lengthening is contributed by the plural morpheme, or whether it is a widespread phonological phenomenon. We will have to wait and see!

Part B

Here, we see some noun roots ending in consonants!. Like in Part A, we see a [-k] ending, but there also seems to be an (epenthesized?) vowel. Looking at this data, I was initially torn; there are four different vowels, and I didn’t want to have to make up four different rules, because that’s pretty messy. (Why have rules at all, then?) Generally, if the last vowel in the root is low, the plural morpheme will be expressed as [-ok]. However, as we see with “ház,” (PL: “házak”), this is not always the case. (And it doesn’t have to do with syllable structure because another one syllable word—“lány”—behaves how we would expect it to.) All very strange.

I’m not completely positive, but my best guess is that these are theme vowels. They appear again in several sections about the different possessive endings, and they remain consistent (e.g. the noun roots that get [o] before [k] to form the plural get [o] before some other suffixes, too).

Since I’m not sure whether theme vowels are epenthesized or inherent, I will state rules with theme vowels (like this one) like this:

Plural: [-k] / V_
[-(tV)k] / C_
(Where (tV)=theme vowel)

II. PERSONAL POSSESSIVES

→ Part A

“my”→[-m]/V_
[-(tV)m]/C_

“your”→[-d]/V_
[-(tV)d]/C_

So far, these rules look a lot like the plural rule. When we get to the third person possessor, however, we see some non-theme vowels showing up!

“his/her/its”→[-ja]/V_
[- ] Elsewhere

This vowel harmonizes for backness (which we see a lot in Hungarian), which is why I left the backness feature underspecified.

→ Part B

There are a couple of ways to analyze this set of data. I think the neatest way is to suggest that there is a general “plural possessor” morpheme ([k]), since all of these forms end in [k]. If this is the case, then we must make another hypothesis, about the ordering of morphemes:

Root-[POSS.person]-[POSS.plural]

However, there is a problem! This structure might predict that you could take the [POSS.plural] suffix off and still have a viable word. As we can see however, this is not the case (bocitok vs. *bocito). Maybe there is some kind of fusion, so that these two features are expressed as one morpheme. (However, that does not account for why they all end in [-k].)

I will continue with the hypothesis that these features have fused (because of the example above), but these morphemes are still a little mysterious.

When we see this data, we may notice that, like we saw in Part A, a [j] is epenthesized when the suffix appears after a vowel. Perhaps, instead of incorporating this into several rules, we could try and make one that applies all the time. We could say that any suffix that begins with a back vowel gets an epenthesized [j] in front of it before it appears after a noun root that ends in a vowel. (NOTE: This only applies when the suffix begins with a back vowel, because, as we can see in Part C, [-i] can attach without a [j] in front of it.)

[j] Insertion:
One way to simplify everything a little bit further might be to create a rule that says that theme vowels show up before suffixes that begin with consonants and after the consonant on the noun root that they are trying to attach to:

**Theme Vowel Epenthesis:**

Using these new rules, we have a much simpler analysis of the possessive morphemes that we have seen so far:

“my” → [-m]  “your” → [-d]  “his/her/its” → [-]

And now, without further ado, the plural possessive morphemes:

“our” → [-nk] / V

This rule says that after a consonant, we will see “unk” or “ünk” (based on backness of preceding V), and just “nk” after a V.

“your (PL)” → [-tek] / V

[ -tek ] Elsewhere

[ -tok ] Elsewhere

We don’t need to mention the theme vowel insertion (yay!), but we still need to specify between “tok” and “tek” because

i. The vowels differ in more than just backness.

ii. We wouldn’t know which one to expect after a noun root ending in a V.

“their” → [-

[ -uk ] / V

We don’t need to specify that [j] is epenthesized after a V, so this is all we need.

→ Part C
This is the section where we start to look at what happens when someone possesses more than one thing. The “plural possessed noun” morpheme seems to look something like this:

**Plural Possessed:** $\rightarrow [-i] \; / \; V$

$\rightarrow [-] \; i$ Elsewhere

This rule says that we will see “ai” or “ei” after Cs (based on the backness of the last V in the root), and “i” after Vs.

Here, there *does* seem to be a specific order to the morphemes:

1. cicá-i-m  
   “kitten-Pl.Poss’d-my”  
   “my kittens”  
   root-Pl.Poss.-Poss.Person

   Aside from inserting this morpheme, the first and second person data does not change very much, in either Part C or part D. It is the third person forms that are especially interesting.

   When the possessor is singular (e.g. “my,” “your,” “his/her/its”) we do not see the third person markings that we saw previously; it looks like we only see the plural possessed morpheme:

2. csigá-i  
   “snail-his/her/its”  
   “his/her/its snail”  
   csigá-i  
   “snail-Pl.Poss’d”  
   “his/her/its snails”

   Perhaps our noun template looks a little different, then. We should try to reflect that second and first person endings can come after the plural possessed morpheme, but third person suffixes cannot (perhaps because they share a slot?)

   root-Pl.Poss/third person-first/second person

   Is it possible to have a template like this, with two options per slot? Looking at this, however, there is an issue! If this template were correct, we would expect to see instances of the third person morphemes appearing before the first/second person morphemes, which we do not. Maybe we could create two potential templates: one for first/second person (where those morphemes can appear with other morphemes) and one for third person (which only shows up when it is by itself):

   a. root- third person
   b. root- Pl.Poss.-first/second person

   If we accept this as a viable template, then note that we do see Pl.Poss appearing on its own (as we would expect), and that when there is no person specified, default seems to be third person (which is pretty common to a lot of languages). For now, I think this is the best template we’ve seen.

$\rightarrow Part \; D$
Here, again, we see first and second person morphemes attaching to the right of the plural possessed morpheme:

(3) a. virág-ai-nk “flower-Pl.Poss-our” “our flowers”
   b. kapu-i-tok “gate-Pl.Poss-your (PL)” “your (PL) gates”

Third person looks like it did when the possessor was singular, except for when the possessor is plural (“their” instead of “his/her/its”), we see a [-k] appearing at the end.

(4) a. almá-i “apple-Pl.Poss” “his/her/its apples”
   b. almá-i-k “their apples”

Earlier I suggested that the [-k] at the end of all the forms with multiple possessors might be its own morpheme, but was discouraged from that idea by the fact that, in Part B of this section, we cannot grammatically remove the [-k]. However, this is an instance where, if we remove the [-k] from the end of these roots with third person, not only is it grammatical, but it means what we’d expect it to mean (the same thing, except with only one possessor).

Perhaps, then, we should have a rule that describes the plural possessor morpheme. (I’m going to call it the “multi-poss’r” morpheme, to distinguish from the “pl.poss’d” morpheme.)

**Multiple Possessors: [-k]**

This looks suspiciously similar to the Plural morpheme, which makes me think that perhaps it is the plural morpheme, and when it shows up after a possessive morpheme, it means that the possessor (rather than the noun itself) is plural, but when it shows up next to the noun root, it means that the noun is plural (because there is no possessor).

root-third person-PL
root-Pl.Poss’d-first/second person-PL

Maybe we could explain why we have different forms before this plural morpheme by suggesting that first and second person each have two different shapes, one for singular possessors and one for plural possessors.

Before we move on, let’s take stock of all the morphemes and rules we have so far:

RULES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Vowel Epenthesis:</th>
</tr>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>[j] Insertion:</th>
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MORPHEMES:


→ *Plural*

**Plural:** [-k]

→ *Singular Possessed Thing (e.g. my (one) snail)*

"my" → [-m]  "your" → [-d]  "his/her/its" → [-]

"our" → [-n]  "your(PL)" → [-te] /  "their" → [-uk] / V_

→ [to] Elsewhere  → [-] Elsewhere

→ *Plural Possessed Thing (e.g. my snails)*

**Plural Possessed:** → [-] / V_

→ [-] Elsewhere

**TEMPLATES:**

root—third person—PL
root—Pl.Poss’d—first/second person—PL

**III. THE DEFINITE ARTICLE**

→ *Part A*

(i) The definite determiner can show as either [a] (before a word beginning with a consonant) or [az] (before a word beginning with a vowel).

**DEF: az/ [V**

a  Elsewhere

(ii) The structure of nominal phrases in Hungarian seems to be very similar to the structure of nominal phrases in English.

→ *Part B*
In Hungarian, unlike in English, the possessive morpheme can appear with a
determiner (e.g. “bocim” → “the cow-my”). This suggests that personal possessives and
determiners are in separate categories in Hungarian.

→ Part C
(i) Ablative: [-tól]

(ii)

root—third person—PL—ABL
root—Pl.Poss’d—first/second person—PL—ABL

It looks like the ablative morpheme (and, I would guess, most case marking)
appears at the very right edge of a word.

THE END