

Skill-check HW #2 | Morpheme alternations in Koromfe

For this assignment, your goal is to demonstrate your understanding of:

- how to identify alternating morphemes
- how to propose a UR and a phonological analysis for an alternating morpheme and argue for your approach
- how to formalize your analysis with our feature model and rule notation, using the tools of our model to make insightful generalizations whenever possible

This data set is from **Koromfé**, a Gur (Niger-Congo) language spoken in Burkina Faso.

- Although none of the words here include it, Koromfé also has the vowel /i/.
- Vowels with the diacritic [~] are [+nasal]. [:] means that the preceding vowel is long.
- Remember to use the [IPA chart](#) linked from the LING 200 course page and our series of handouts on features, to help you decide how to describe segments.

<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
[gɪbrɛ]	[gɪba]	'hatchet'
[hubrɛ]	[hubʌ]	'ditch'
[nɛbrɛ]	[nɛba]	'pea'
[lugrɛ]	[lugʌ]	'side'
[dɪŋgrɛ]	[dɪŋgʌ]	'bush type'
[zɔŋgrɛ]	[zɔŋgʌ]	'wing'
[lɔŋgrɛ]	[lɔŋga]	'shoe'
[sɛkrɛ]	[sɛka]	'half'
[tɛfrɛ]	[tɛfa]	'cotton fiber'
[dabɛ:rɛ]	[dabɛ:ja]	'camp'
[dɔ:rɛ]	[dɔ:ja]	'long'
[gɪga:rɛ]	[gɪga:ja]	'vulture'
[pɔpa:rɛ]	[pɔpa:ja]	'grass type'
[dʊmdɛ]	[dʊma]	'lion'
[hulomde]	[hulomʌ]	'marrow'
[tɛmdɛ]	[tɛma]	'beard'
[logomde]	[logomʌ]	'camel'
[bɪndɛ]	[bɪna]	'heart'
[hɔ̃ndɛ]	[hɔ̃na]	'hoe'
[hondɛ]	[honʌ]	'bean'
[geŋde]	[geŋʌ]	'pebble'
[zɛŋde]	[zɛŋa]	'upper arm'
[bɛllɛ]	[bɛla]	'back'
[jillɛ]	[jɪla]	'horn'
[sellɛ]	[selʌ]	'space'
[pallɛ]	[pala]	'stretcher'

- (1) The plural morpheme in this data set is an alternating morpheme. List all the distinct **surface forms of this morpheme** that appear. (Pay careful attention to what this question is asking for. What is a *morpheme*?)

- (2) Describe the **phonological environments** that determine which surface form of the plural morpheme appears where. Do this both with ordinary language (using traditional phonetics terms such as “fricative”, “vowel”, “obstruent”, etc.) and with the tools of our current phonological model.

The strongest answer to this question will make insightful generalizations. Consider both the behavior of the plural morpheme in multiple environments, and the behavior of other alternating morphemes in this data set, when you think about this.

- (3) The singular morpheme in this data set is also an alternating morpheme. List all the distinct **surface forms of this morpheme** that appear. (Again, pay careful attention to what this question is asking for. What is meant by *singular morpheme*? Does English have a “singular morpheme”?)

- (4) Propose and defend an analysis of the alternations seen in the singular morpheme.
 - (a) State your proposal for the **UR** for this morpheme.
 - (b) State any **changes** (phonological processes) the grammar needs to enforce in order to account for the surface forms of Koromfé words in the singular. State your changes in ordinary language and with the tools of our current phonological model. Look for opportunities to make generalizations over segment classes and by considering other morphemes in the data set.
 - (c) As far as possible, **defend** your UR choice using the criteria for choosing a UR that we have developed in class. (If there is no basis for choosing between two hypotheses, you may just say that and choose one arbitrarily.)