

Morphological Analysis: Michoacan Aztec

This exercise is about breaking down words from another language into their meaningful parts. Just follow along the questions. If you need help, consult the section in the Text called “Side note: How to Morphological Analysis” (near the beginning of Chapter 2).

This exercise has data from the language Michoacan Aztec, which is a native language of Mexico. The **data set**, the set of words that are given below, have beside them their English translations, called **glosses**. What linguists do when faced with this kind of data is to ask if there is any pattern to them, and what they tell us about the structure of the this language and language in general.

Data from Michoacan Aztec

1.	nokali	‘my house’	9.	mopelomes	‘your dogs’
2.	nokalimes	‘my houses’	10.	ipelo	‘his dog’
3.	mokali	‘your house’	11.	pelo	‘dog’
4.	ikali	‘his house’	12.	nokwahmili	‘my cornfield’
5.	kali	‘house’	13.	mokwahmili	‘your cornfield’
6.	kalimes	‘houses’	14.	ikwahmili	‘his cornfield’
7.	nopelo	‘my dog’	15.	ikwahmilimes	‘his cornfields’
8.	mopelo	‘your dog’	16.	kwahmili	‘cornfield’

At first, it appears as though it is just a list of words from Michoacan Aztec. But look closely, especially at the English glosses. For instance, the words in 4. and 5.

4.	ikali	‘his house’
5.	kali	‘house’

1. The word in 4. is glossed as ‘his house’, while the word in 5. is glossed as ‘house’. Based on this, can you figure out the what means *his* in the language? Write down the Michoacan Aztec forms corresponding to the English words in the spaces below. [A “form” is the sequence of letters or sounds in the language]

a. house _____

b. his _____

You just did a morphological analysis. **Morphology** is study of the structure of words, and morphological analysis is breaking down words into their parts.

see page 2...

Name: _____

Exercise 202

p.2/2

In finding the meanings of the parts of the words above, we looked at a pair of words that were almost identical in their meaning except for one part. Above, the difference was 'his' in the English gloss. That is what allowed us to conclude what the "left over" bit of the word in 4. meant.

2. Apply this same reasoning to the rest of the data to fill out the spaces below with the pieces of words from Michoacan Aztec that correspond to the English words given. To get started, find another pair of words that are minimally different in form and meaning. Slowly, you'll be able to fill in all the pieces.

(a) dog _____ house _____

cornfield _____

(b) your _____ his _____

my _____

(c) plural _____

(*plural* is the name of the part of the word that is added to indicate there is more than one; in English, it is the "-s" that is added onto certain words)

3. Given what you now know about Michoacan Aztec, what do you think the word for 'your houses' is?