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Taking a Free Ride in Morphophonemic Learning
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Abstract: As language learners begin to analyze morphologically complex words, they face the problem of projecting underlying representations from the morphophonemic alternations that they observe. Research on learnability in Optimality Theory has started to address this problem, and this article deals with one aspect of it. When alternation data tell the learner that some surface [B]s are derived from underlying /A/s, the learner will under certain conditions generalize by deriving all [B]s, even nonalternating ones, from /A/s. An adequate learning theory must therefore incorporate a procedure that allows nonalternating [B]s to take a «free ride» on the /A/ →[B] unfaithful map.

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