Preface

For every scientific discipline there are fruitful periods and periods of decline. Morphology was a very central field in the structuralist period, both in the European and in the American tradition. Unfortunately, the pendulum swung back with early generative grammar, mainly because of the priority assigned to syntax. A sign of this lack of interest in morphology during the sixties is the fact that morphology was not supposed to account for a specific set of problems: sometimes it was attached to the syntactic component (morphosyntax) and sometimes to the phonological component (morphophonology).

In the last ten years, on the contrary, morphology has received a great deal of attention. It has, in fact, become an entire subcomponent of the grammar (morphological component), which is now thought to operate in an autonomous way with respect to the other components of the grammar. Today, an explicit formal status is attributed to morphological rules, and the study of the properties of these rules has lead us to discover that in the lexicon there are many more regularities than we originally imagined. As has been pointed out, morphology today is a micro-system, with a dictionary of primitives (words, stems, affixes, etc.), formal rules (Word Formation Rules) and abstract principles that govern the form and the functioning of the rules (adjacency condition, unitary base hypothesis, etc.).

In this book, we will examine the historical context in which the "new" generative morphology has evolved (Chapter I), the work that "founded" the field, Halle's 1973 proposal (Chapter II) and the first theoretical, non episodic, proposal, that of Aronoff 1976 (Chapters III and IV). Following this, a model of the organization of the lexical component is given, along with some well formedness conditions (Chapter V), In addition, a model is proposed for the interplay among the various types of morphological rules, namely derivation, inflection and compounding rules (Chapter VI).

Next, a closer look is taken at word formation rules, and a number of constraints on these rules are examined (Chapter VII). Finally, it is argued that while morphology and syntax must be considered separate subcomponents of the grammar, they interact in interesting ways (Chapter VIII).

As is clear throughout the book, the works of Halle (1973), Siegel (1974), Aronoff (1976), Allen (1978) are seen as basic in the development of the relatively homogeneous theory of generative morphology as it is

X Generative Morphology

understood today, and our debt to these works is great. Nevertheless, the morphological model proposed in this book differs from each of the models offered in the works cited above. Most differences derive from the facts that cross-linguistic evidence has been taken into account wherever possible, and that the final proposal also draws on more recent developments in morphology (e.g. Lieber 1980, Williams 1981a, Selkirk 1982) which have considerably improved our understanding of the field. Of course, much work remains to be done in the relatively new field of morphology.