



IIT Madras
ONLINE DEGREE

Plurality in English

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Words (nouns)

- Nouns are naming words.
- All words denoting/referring to names are nouns.
- They could be:
 - Singular
 - Plural

Singular and Plural Nouns

| | |
|----------|---------|
| • Dog | Dogs |
| • Friend | Friends |
| • Judge | Judges |
| • Bench | Benches |
| • Baby | Babies |
| • Book | Books |
| • Cap | Caps |

Plural Marking sounds

- Plural markers in English appear to be sounds like: /z/, iz/, and /s/.

| | | |
|----------|-----|------|
| • Dog | s | /z/ |
| • Friend | s | /z/ |
| • Judge | s | /iz/ |
| • Bench | es | /iz/ |
| • Baby | ies | /z/ |
| • Book | s | /s/ |
| • Cap | s | /s/ |

Morphemes

- sit
- seats
- Sits

- Five instances of the sound /s/
- Two types
- In [seats], the first /s/ does not mean anything, whereas the second /s/ is a plural marker.
- In [sits], the first /s/ does not have any meaning where as the second /s/ is a singular marker.

Understanding Plurals in English

- In words ending in sounds /p/, /t/, and /k/, the plural markers sound as /s/.
- Every where else the plural marker in English is /z/.
- There does not seem to be much of a difference between /z/ and /iz/.

Plural rule

- The rule is:
 - /z/ becomes /s/ (in the environment of /p/, /t/, /k/)
 - Everywhere else it remains /z/.
- The reason for this is the following: /p/, /t/, and /k/ are voiceless sounds, where /z/ is a voiced sound. In the environment of a voiceless sound, a voiced plural marker becomes voiceless.