



IIT Madras

BSc Degree

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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
- Friend
- Judge
- Bench
- Baby
- Book
- Cap



Dogs
Friends
Judges
Benches
Babies
Books
Caps

Plural Marking sounds

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

• Dog ^s	/z/
• Friends	/z/
• Judges	/iz/
• Benches	/iz/
• Bab ^{ies}	/z/
• Books	/s/
• Caps	/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 whereas 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.