



The World of Languages
and Languages of the World



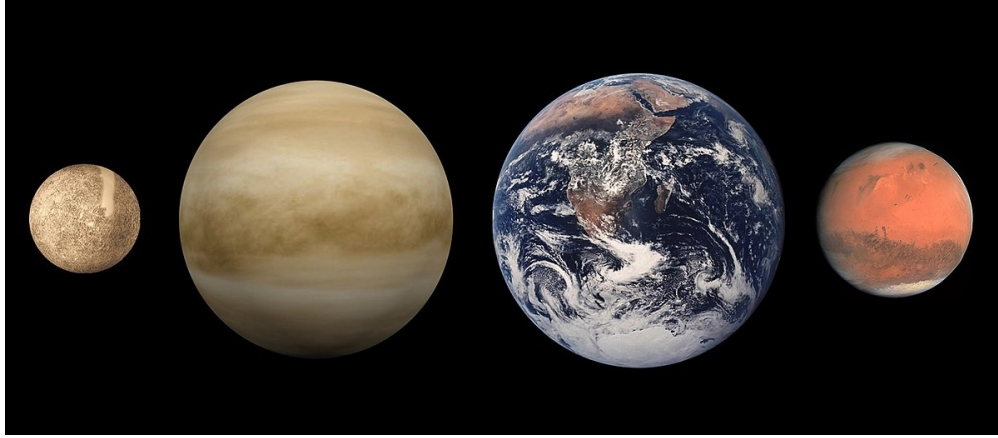
Queen Mary Invented
Languages Scheme

Choosing Words

Today, let's decide how you'll choose the length of words for your language and how you'll make plurals.

Acknowledgements

- Adapted with thanks from the Queen Mary Invented Languages Scheme materials, protected under CC-BY-NC.
- Thanks to Professor David Adger and Dr Coppe van Urksor at <https://creatinglanguages.org/>



Building Words

Now that you have syllables made of consonants and vowels, you need to put them together to form **words**.

You've already made a few words for things on your planet, but when we create a language, we have to make many words and you have to choose what your words will be like.



Long Words or Short Words?

The Inuit language, spoken in Northern Alaska, Canada and Greenland, uses very long words.
<https://youtu.be/iPGAbctSHuY?t=46>

- *Sinijjuaqlauqtuq.*
'She slept for a long time.'
- *Niritsiaqtuq.*
'She is eating very well.'
- *Ayagciqsugnarqnillruuq*
'He said he would probably go.'
- *qarisaujattsiaavaralaaq*
'small good computer'



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How do words in some languages become so long?

Morphemes

Answer: They consist of multiple **parts**.

qarisaujat – tsiava – ralaag

computer – good – small

`small good computer’



We call parts of words **morphemes**.

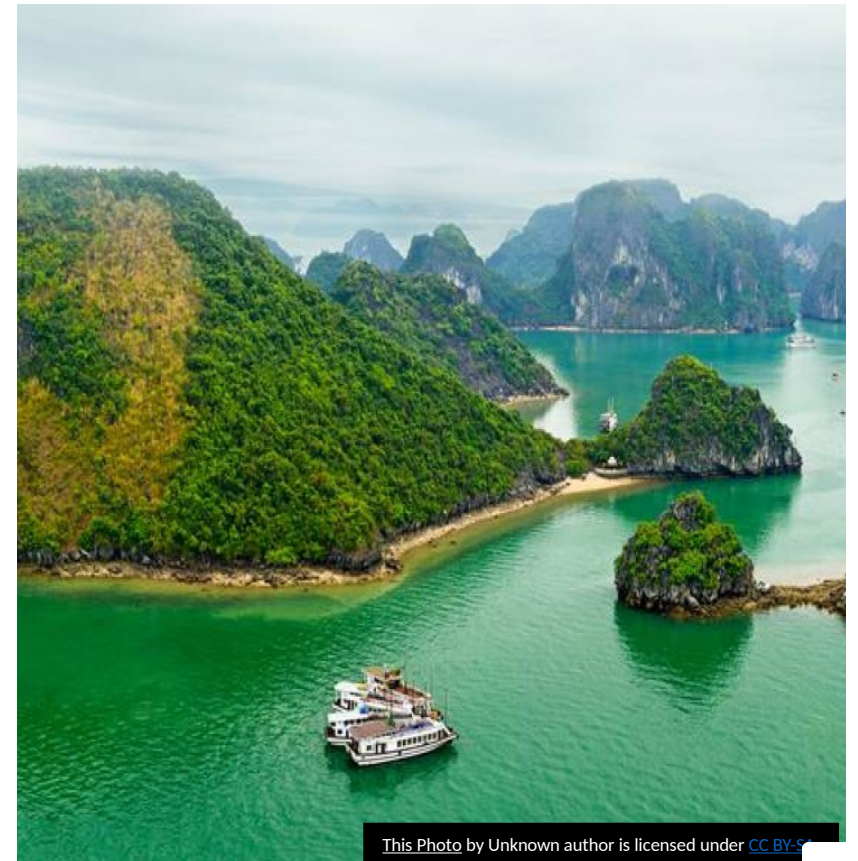
Some morphemes can never be words by themselves but must appear with another morpheme. These are called **affixes**.

Long Words or Short Words?

Vietnamese, spoken in Vietnam, uses lots of very short words.

- *Khi toi den nha ban toi, chung toi bat dau lam bai.*
- ‘When I came to my friend’s house, we began to do lessons.’
- *Co ay co gap ai do khong?*
- ‘Did she meet someone?’

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-lVudWbCaik>



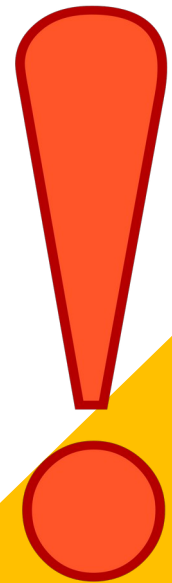
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Morphemes and Words

Vietnamese has one morpheme per word. There are, therefore, lots of short words and no affixes.

English has a few morphemes per word. There are a good number of medium-length words and some affixes.

Inuit has lots of morphemes per word . There are a small number of very long words and lot of affixes.





Design Choice 4

How long will the
words in your
language be?

Create 10 new words.

Aliens have come to your planet! Monsters have come to your island!

Invent a few creatures of different types, in different numbers to populate your island. You might have a lot of sheep, but only one dragon, and a lot of aliens that tend the goats and defend them against the dragon.

Come up with names for the creatures on your planet or island.



Plurals



In English, we usually show the difference between one thing and more than one with **s** at the end of the word:

monster monster-**s**

dog dog-**s**

In other languages, you add different sounds. In Somali, you usually add **o**:

kab kab-**o** naag naag-**o**

‘shoe’ ‘shoes’ ‘woman’ ‘women’

Plurals



Of course, English does other things too. You can't add s if the word ends in an s already, or a z or sh:

bus bus-**es**

brush brush-**es**

And some words are just different! Some nouns don't change and some nouns add different sounds:

sheep sheep

ox ox-**en**

child child-**ren**

Plurals

In Vietnamese, you make a plural by using a separate word:

singular:	con gau	'bear'
plural:	nhung con gau	'bears'

In Swahili, words have a prefix that signifies whether it is singular or plural:

singular:	mtu	'person'
plural:	watu	'persons'
singular:	rafiki	'friend'
plural:	marafiki	'friends'



Plurals

In Turkish, some nouns add -ler:

kalem kalem-ler göz göz-ler
'pen' 'pens' 'eye' 'eyes'

But other nouns add -lar:

kapı kapı-lar araba araba-lar
'door' 'doors' 'car' 'cars'



Reduplication

Another option you have is **reduplication**. In some languages, you repeat a morpheme instead of having an affix or another word.

In Indonesian, reduplication indicates plural:

kucing 'cat'

kucing-kucing 'cats'

Reduplication in English has other meanings.
What does it mean if you are going “out out”?





Design Choice 5

How will you create plurals?

Write down 10 plurals.

Now pick at least two of your plurals and make it different from the others.

Some unusual languages

You can also have more than two numbers. In Inuit, nouns can be singular, plural, or **dual**:

matu 'a door'

matu-uk 'two doors'

matu-it 'more than two doors'

In Fijian, there is a number for small groups of three to six. This is called **paucal**:

au 'I' *keitou* 'we (3-6)'

keirau 'we (2)' *keda* 'we (7+)'

A final challenge...

- Translate these words into your language:

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| • Tree | Trees |
| • Mountain | Mountains |
| • Monster | Monsters |
| • Water | |
| • River | Rivers |



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