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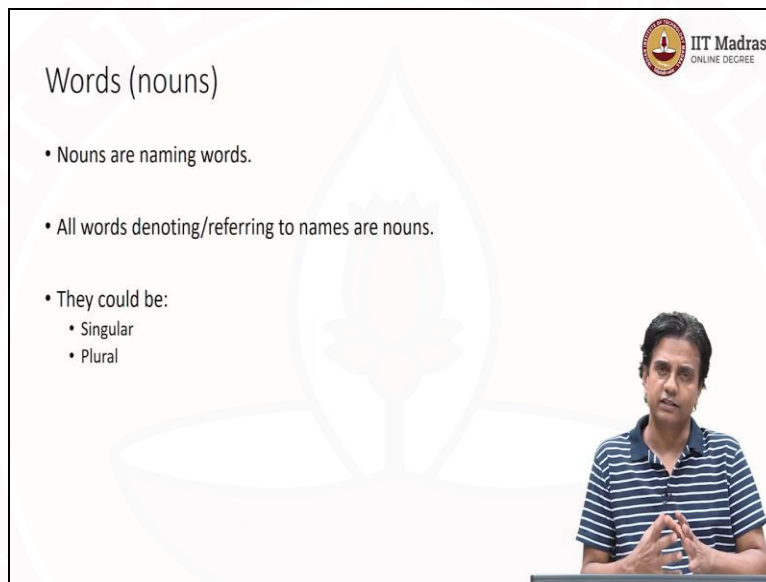
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English-I(Basic English)
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Plurality in English

Welcome to the class. Today, we will look at plurals in English, i.e., plural words. Plurality is one specific feature of nouns in English or for that matter in any language. But we are going to look at English nouns to learn English.

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Words (nouns)

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

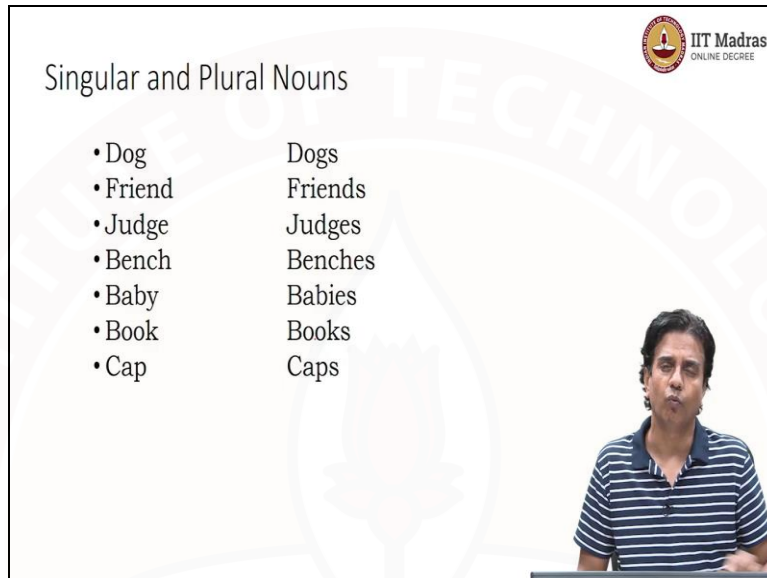
The slide also features a video inset of Prof. Rajesh Kumar in the bottom right corner, speaking and gesturing with his hands. The IIT Madras logo is visible in the top right corner of the slide.

So, we know that there are lots of other categories of words in any language like nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs, prepositions and so on. We are going to look at those descriptions in other classes, but today we will talk specifically about nouns and one specific feature of this noun which is called plurality. So, given this, what we see is nouns can be of two types; i.e. singular nouns and plural nouns. So, this is important; singular nouns and plural nouns.

We also need to know what is a noun. As I said, we will look at these things in details in some other class. But, for the purpose of this class and, for the purpose of definition, if we say a noun is a word which denotes the name of anything in short; nouns are naming words. Names of anything is a noun. That will cover all other definitions like a person, place, thing, i.e. when somebody says noun is a word which is the name of a person, place or thing.

We can reduce that also to the following that nouns are naming words. So, that is about nouns. So, when we talk about nouns, they can be of two types one is singular and the other plural. To be absolutely clear about that; singular is one. Anything that is denoting one element is called singular; that is the singularity feature of a noun. Plural is more than one. In English and in many other languages, anything that is more than one is considered plural.

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Singular and Plural Nouns	
• Dog	Dogs
• Friend	Friends
• Judge	Judges
• Bench	Benches
• Baby	Babies
• Book	Books
• Cap	Caps

So, with this information about nouns and the meaning of singular and plural, we need to see what is it; how is it that we see plurals or plurality indicated on English words. How do we learn it? So, when we start observing patterns, we see the following things. Look at some of these nouns, very commonly used nouns like talk, friend, judge, bench, baby, book, cap.



What we see in these nouns is when we make them plurals we see these are the plural words. You can read these words for yourself. Plurals are dogs, dolls, friends, judges, benches, babies, books, caps. This is how these words sound. These are singular forms, and these are plural forms. Singular forms are dog, friend, judge, bench, baby, book, cap. Read it for yourself- dog, friend, judge, bench, baby, book and cap. Plurals are dogs, friends, judges, benches, babies, books, caps. If we are asked to indicate what marks plurality on these words, we can indicate like this.

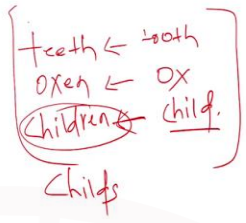
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Plural Marking sounds

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

• Dogs	/z/	
• Friends	/z/	
• Judges	/iz/	
• Benches	/iz/	
• Babies	/z/	
• Books	/s/	
• Caps	/s/	





We can indicate that in a plural word, we add s or es or ies. So, we see s as you see in many examples, dog, friend, judge and book and cap and in some examples, we are adding es like bench and baby. ies in babies and there are more. For example, a word like knife, there are more words where we see different types of plural markers. But we will stick to our discussion on some simple words.

Among the different types of descriptions, what we want to specifically mention and leave them aside are words like teeth which is the plural of tooth. Words like oxen, which is the plural of ox and children, which is the plural of child. We want to leave these things aside, not because we do not want to discuss them but because these are some reminiscences of old English. You know, languages change time to time, languages develop some patterns, and people acquire those patterns, and this refers to the dynamic nature of language.

Due to some process in the language, certain things do not change, and they remain in the older format. So, these are the examples of certain older formats, and we carry them forward in English, maybe at some time, they will also change. Maybe we will see some people say instead of children, childs. We do not know, but as of now the plural of child is children. So we will leave them aside. I want you to focus on this pattern where when we see the pattern; we see that we add either S or ES or IES or maybe a few more.

So what is the rule of plural formation in English? How do we learn it? There are a lot of words, a lot of nouns in English. We need to know about that because we are going to be using plurality all the time. To understand this, there is a very simple rule. That rule first makes us pay attention to something else which is, instead of looking at how these words are written in singular and plural, we need to look at how these words are spoken in singular and plural.

Please hear it out one more time. Instead of looking at how these words are written in their singular forms and plural forms, we need to look at how these words are spoken in their singular forms and plural forms. What will be the difference if we change this pattern, i.e., if we look at how words are spoken, what will be the difference? The difference is we are going to be paying attention to the sounds.

And in particular, the last sounds of these words. What is the last sound in these words? If you look at singular, go back and look at singular words. What was the last sound in these words in their singular form? In a word like dog, the last sound is g. In a word like friend, the last sound is d. In a word like judge, the last sound is j. In a word like bench, the last sound is ch. In a word like baby, the last sound is e; it is a vowel sound. In a word like book, the last sound is k, and in a word like cap, the last sound is p. In a word like cat, the last sound is t. So, take any word and look at the last sound.

So, what we add as the plural marker is also important to look at it. So, how does the plural marker sound in these words? Now read the plural markers. How does it sound? When we say dogs, it sounds as z. Dogs, friends, judges. So look at it. It looks like; we are adding s.

But when you are looking at this, we are adding z; we are adding z. But when we come here, we need to add z, because this preceding sound is also a consonant and thus such a sequence will make it very difficult to speak, we add a short vowel here which makes it sound like iz, judges this is why you see it here iz. Bench-benches because z and iz these are alveolar or sounds from palatal region depending on who speaks. These things we are just inserting another vowel; otherwise, it is z.

In a word like babies, remember the last sound of baby? The singular form was e. Anyway, what we are doing here is, we are adding only z, and it becomes babies. And in a word like books, we are adding s and in a word like caps, we are adding s again. So, when we look at this, we see there are two distinct patterns. In some words, we are adding s, in some words we are adding z. This pattern emerges when you look at how these words are spoken.

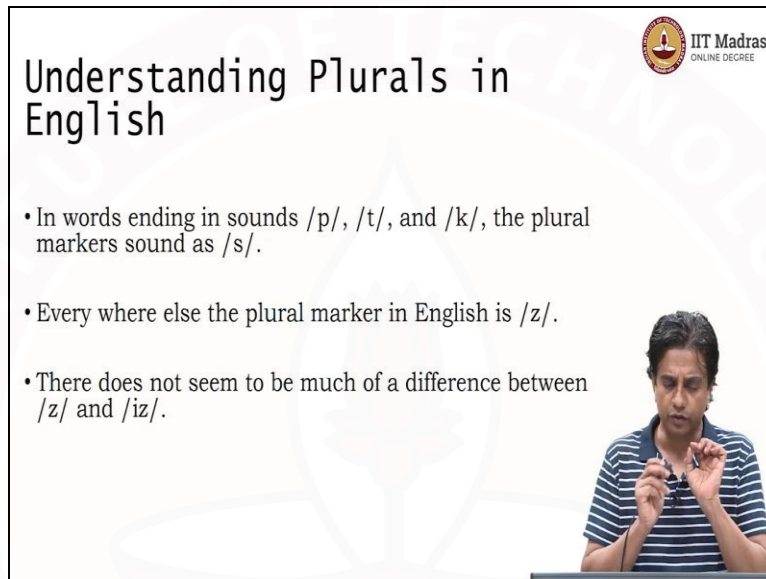
So, in the process of learning, we can also say instead of saying in some place add s, in some place add es, in some place add ies, we can simply say, speak the word and then add either s or z to it because there is only two plural marking sounds in English. You only need to know where we need to add s and where we need to add z. This is the most critical part of learning plurality in English. Once we figure this out, we are done with plurality. It is a very simple rule and helps us capture most of the words in plurality and understanding plurality in English.

And in return, it also helps us improve our pronunciation; it also helps us improve how we speak. So, we do not want to say it sounds like dogs. We do not want to say word dogs as dogs, friends; we want to say the way it is spoken like dogz. I also want to remind you to do this exercise for yourself. Take any 15 to 20 words for yourself. Take your note again, the same pattern of exercise. Take a notebook, close your eyes, think about some nouns or if you are not finding them look around yourself whatever you see chairs, computers, TV, plates, clocks anything that you see just write down the name because you know nouns are naming words. You see door; you see window. Anything that you see, just try to write down the plural form. Observe the plural markers, what they are, and to learn that, here is the rule that we are going to talk about.

The rules are very simple. Now, before we look at the rules, look at these two sounds s and z. If you apply your learning of places of articulations of these sounds, you will see that s and z; both are fricative sounds. The only difference is this is not voiced, and this is voiced. Remember, when we speak a voice sound, we see some vibration on this one in our vocal cords. So, when you say s, put it here, try it for yourself and see when you say s, you would not feel any additional vibration here.


But when you say z, you will feel some vibration coming from here. So, this vibration from the vocal cord while saying the sound z, which is technically known as voicing makes the difference between s and z. So, in one way, we can say it is the same sound with the difference of voicing. In one situation, it is not voiced, in one situation it is voiced. But let us take them as two different sounds s and z. Now we only need to know where we use s and where we use z. The rule is pretty simple.

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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/.



The rule is very simple in English if the word ends with three sounds, p, t, k, any noun in English which ends with these three sounds, i.e. if the last sound of a word is either p, t or k, use s sound. Everywhere else the plural marker is s. Look how simple it is, if a word does not end with p, t, k, safely you can add plural markers z. Look at a word like clock, this word ends with k. Very simple; plural is clocks.

Take any other word window. What is the last sound of this word? o, it is a vowel sound, and more importantly, it is not one of these that is p, t, k. Very safely, you can say the plural marking sound at the end of this word is z. Keep in mind that we are not talking about how we spell it, in our spelling we may add s, but, when we say the word plural word of window, it sounds as windowz and that is z sound. This is what we are talking about.

So the last sound was o, a vowel sound, which means not one of these three. So, safely the plural marker is z. If a word has one of these sounds, the plural marker is s. That's all is the rules of plurality in English. As we know, there is not much of a difference between these two. A vowel sound comes here just to break the continuity of two consonant sounds. In a word like judges or benches or some other words also wherever it comes in, i.e., wherever there is not a vowel sound already at the end of the word.

So, if you go back and look at the words, it makes sense. The last sound of this word book is k, so the plural marker is s. Last sound of the word cap is p, so the plural marker is s. So, last sound of this word cat is t. So the plural marker in a word like cat could be s, or in a word like window, the plural marker could be z. It is windows. Take any word computer, bottle, irrespective of how we write the word, we add s in computer, but it sounds computers, bottles.

Take any word that comes to your mind, rose, so the last sound is z. So, here we will need to add a vowel in it, to make it sound like roses—the same thing which we were adding in judges or benches. So, plural marking is a pretty simple phenomenon in English nouns. The only thing we need to look at is, how we speak these things, how these words sound. And then additionally, we need to learn how they are written. That is pretty simple.

So, to do this exercise, I sincerely request you, I urge you to first look at 15 to 20 words that come to your mind without looking at anything. Then take a set of nouns, take a set of 20 words and identify nouns in those 20 words and repeat the same exercise. Say these words to yourself in the singular form first. Identify the last sound in the plural form, last sound in the singular form.

Then, decide what will be added to these words. In other words, when you add plural markers in words when you have identified the last sounds of the singular words, be very sure and comfortable that if the word does not end with p, t and k, only these three sounds, then everywhere else you can use z, with these sounds you can add s. What is common in these sounds is not very important for the purpose of speaking English. But, when you know about a sound, about sounds and commonalities between these sounds, you will feel better, happier.

What is common in all these things are, all these sounds p, t and k, they are coming from three different places of articulations like p is a bilabial sound, t is an alveolar sound and k is a velar sound. Nonetheless, all three of them are stop sounds. So, we will see the importance of these sounds being stop sounds in English and how they help us observe more patterns later. But at this point, they help us conclude this discussion on plurality in English very safely and very confidently.

So, do this exercise for yourself, add them confidently and try to improve your speech confidently by looking at these patterns. So, you clearly know what accurately the plural markers are and how accurately those nouns are pronounced when we speak English. With that, we stop here. Thank you. See you soon.