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CSCI 5832
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Assignment 1

How many words do you know in your native language?

Provide me with an answer and a short rationale for it (no longer than necessary). Your rationale should include some discussion of what you decided what a word was, what “knowing a word” meant, what “how many” meant, and the method you used to come up with the estimate.

My native language is Vietnamese and I estimate that I know about 10,000 to 15,000 *unique* words. Asking Google how many words there are in the Vietnamese language/dictionary was surprisingly futile. It seems the general consensus by language teaching companies is that native speaker know about 10,000 to 30,000 words of a language.¹ Vietnamese has no verb conjugations for tenses or plurals, so I am simply counting unique words that appear in the dictionary, and this also includes filler words. Basically, if given a sentence, I count the words that appear at least once. If I know a word’s definition and connotation, I would say I know it. Given a relatively lengthy academic text in Vietnamese, I probably can read and comprehend about 60 to 80% of it. But after a few years in the US, I think I might know more English fancy words now...

¹<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/how-many-words-do-i-need-to-know/>