

Toki Taster

Toki Pona is a human constructed language created by Sonja Lang in 2010. It was an attempt to simplify ideas to their most basic elements. For example, what is a professor but a ‘person of knowledge’? And if you’re hungry, then you ‘want eat’. In Sonja’s words,

“If English is a thick novel, then Toki Pona is a haiku.”

Enough with the introduction though, let’s build some sentences using the sentence formula ‘Noun + li + Noun’. For example, ‘lipu li ijo’ translates to ‘a book is something’. If you’d like to add adjectives, they come after nouns, I.e, ‘suli jan li wawa’ translates

Nouns		Adjectives	
<i>ijo</i>	something, thing, being	<i>suli</i>	big, large
<i>jan</i>	person, human	<i>lili</i>	little, small
<i>mi</i>	I, me, we	<i>pona</i>	good, simple, friendly
<i>sina</i>	you	<i>wawa</i>	strong, confident, powerful
<i>ni</i>	this, that	<i>mute</i>	many, very, a lot
<i>nanpa</i>	number	<i>ala</i>	no, not, zero
<i>lipu</i>	document, book	<i>ike</i>	bad, negative
<i>telo</i>	water	<i>sin</i>	new, another, fresh
<i>sona</i>	knowledge		
<i>toki</i>	language		
<i>kili</i>	fruit, vegetable		

Now let’s add simple noun phrases and verbs. Noun phrases can be constructed using the formula ‘Noun Noun’, E.g. ‘lipu sona’ translates to ‘book of knowledge’. To build transitive verb phrases, use the formula ‘Noun + li + Verb + e + Object’. For example, ‘jan pona li jo e lipu sona’.

Verbs	
<i>jo</i>	to have, carry, contain
<i>kute</i>	to listen to, obey
<i>moku</i>	to eat, drink
<i>pali</i>	to make, do, work on
<i>sona</i>	to know
<i>toki</i>	to talk, speak, communicate
<i>wile</i>	to want, need

You’ve probably realized how incredibly ambiguous this language can be. For instance, my shopping list in Toki Pona would look something like: kili, kili, kili, . . .

Try converting the following sentences from Toki Pona to English:

1. mi moku.
2. mi wile telo.
3. sona toki pi sona nanpa.

Now from English to Toki Pona:

1. I am eating an eggplant.
2. Our small community is friendly.
3. Mathematical linguistics is fun.