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ITHKUIL

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Ithkuil is a constructed [language](#).All Ithkuil formatives, whether functioning as [nouns](#) or [verbs](#), inflect for nine Configurations, four Affiliations, four Perspectives, six Extensions, two Essences, four Contexts, and two Designations, and can take any of approximately 1800 optional suffixes. These morphological categories are explained in the sections which follow.

To understand the Ithkuil concept of enumeration and quantification of [nouns](#) (i.e., what other languages term singular, plural, etc.) one must analyze three separate but related grammatical categories termed Configuration, Affiliation, and Perspective. These concepts are alien to other languages.

CONFIGURATION

The nine configurations are the UNIPLEX, DUPLEX, DISCRETE, AGGREGATIVE, SEGMENTATIVE, COMPONENTIAL, COHERENT, COMPOSITE, and MULTIFORM

UNIPLEX

The UNIPLEX configuration indicates a single, contextual embodiment of the stem concept, i.e., one whole contextual unit of the basic nominal stem, e.g., a [tree](#), a [person](#), a screwdriver, a grape, a [hammer](#) blow, a [hole](#). With [verbs](#) the UNIPLEX signifies a single, holistic act, state, or event, e.g., to [be](#) a [tree](#), to become a [person](#), to use a screwdriver, to eat a grape, to strike (once) with a [hammer](#), to dig a [hole](#).

FORMULA = SINGLE OBJECT (singular but not plural)

DUPLEX

The DUPLEX configuration indicates a related binary set. While it often refers to [body](#) parts, e.g., one's eyes, ears, lungs, wings, etc., it can also [be](#) used to describe any set of two identical or complementary objects or entities, e.g., a matched pair of vases, a two-volume set, a set of bookends, mutual opponents. Thus, the Ithkuil word for spouse inflected for the DUPLEX configuration would translate as a man and wife or a married couple.

One context in which the DUPLEX appears for both [nouns](#) and [verbs](#) is with events which contain two complementary "halves" exemplified by English words [such](#) as bounce, flash, arc, wag, swing, switch, breathe/respiration, indeed, any concept which involves a dual-state notion of [up](#)/down, to/fro, back/forth, in/out, empty/full, or on/off. Use of the DUPLEX in these contexts implies a full cycling through the two complementary states involved. For example the word for [hammer](#) blow inflected for the UNIPLEX would signify the singular impact of the [hammer](#), whereas the same word inflected for the DUPLEX signifies a single down-then-[up](#) cycle of the swing of the [hammer](#), the two complementary "halves" of the [action](#) being divided by the impact

Wing – Breath

FORMULA = twins , mirror symmetry , eyes , ears , lungs , wings , pair

DISCRETE

The DISCRETE configuration indicates a grouping or set of the basic stem units that are more or less identiform (each having the same design or physical appearance). This grouping or set-nature can be either spatial, as in a flock of gulls (flying together), or temporal (i.e., sequentially repetitive or iterative) as in (a flock of) gulls flying one after another. Further examples of English nouns or noun phrases which would be translated using the DISCRETE are a grove, a set of screwdrivers, a group of soldiers, a pile of leaves, a bowl of grapes, a series of hammer blows, an area of holes. Thus, the Ithkuil word for (identical) set would simply be the word for thing or object inflected for the DISCRETE configuration. Note that the distinction between a spatially configured set versus a temporally (i.e., iterative) configured set would be made by use of either the DPR suffix, -šk, or the SEP suffix, -mb specifying which spacetime axis is implied.
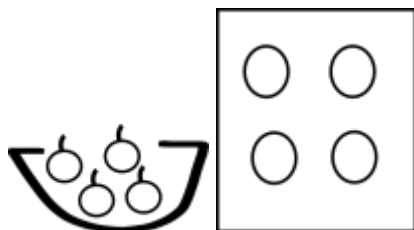
bowl of grapes and area of holes

AGGREGATIVE

The AGGREGATIVE configuration functions like the DISCRETE above in referring to an associated group or set of entities, except that the members of the configurational set are not identical to one another. Examples of English words/entities which would be translated using the AGGREGATIVE are a forest (of different kinds of trees), a toolset, a citizens group, a mixed pile of leaves, an assortment of animals, an area of different-sized holes, a series of musical notes. With verbs, the AGGREGATIVE implies a spatially or temporally repeated set of non-identical acts, events, or states considered as a whole contextual unit. It would be used, for example, in translating the sentence This morning I dug holes in my garden (i.e., of different sizes). Examples:
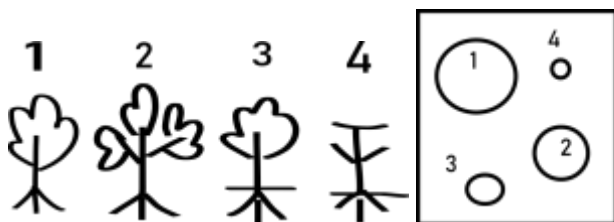
bowl of grapes and area of holes

FORMULA = plural (but different

SEGMENTATIVE

The SEGMENTATIVE configuration indicates a grouping or set of the basic stem units, the individual members of which are physically similar or identical and are either in physical contact with one another, physically connected via some linking medium, or in sufficiently close contact with one another so that the group moves or operates together. Examples would be a web, a train of flatcars, a convoy of schoolbuses, a string of pearls, a fall of leaves, a line of dancers, a parade of Barbie dolls (e.g., coming off an assembly line). To illustrate the difference between this configuration and the DISCRETE above, we saw that the word grape in the DISCRETE would be translated as a serving of grapes, while in the SEGMENTATIVE it would mean a bunch of grapes (i.e., still connected to each other on a portion of vine).

With verbs, the use of the SEGMENTATIVE versus the DISCRETE implies that the repetitive/iterative nature of the act, state, or event occurs naturally due to the contextual nature of the precipitating event or agent. It would thus be used to distinguish the fuselage of bullets from a machine-gun from the simple hail of bullets from single-fire weapons. Likewise, it would distinguish The light is blinking from The light is flashing, where blink implies the way in which the source naturally emits light, while flash implies that the light is being made to emit repetitive bursts of light. Examples:

A Line of dancers and A string of pearls

COMPONENTIAL

The COMPONENTIAL configuration operates identically to the SEGMENTATIVE above, except that the individual members of the configurational set are not physically similar or identical to each other. Examples of English words/entities which would be translated using the COMPONENTIAL are a freight train, a cascade of (mixed) fruit (i.e., a continuous stream of fruit falling), a line of ticketholders, a parade of floats, a pattern of musical notes. With verbs, the COMPONENTIAL signifies a connected series of repetitions where the individual acts, events, or states comprising the repetitive set are non-identical. It would distinguish The light twinkled from The light was blinking.

A string of Different pearls

COHERENT

The COHERENT configuration functions similarly to the SEGMENTATIVE above, except that the individual members of the configuration are connected, fused or mixed with one another to form a coherent emergent entity, i.e., the total configuration of objects constitutes an entirely new gestalt-like entity. Examples of English words which would be translated using the COHERENT are a bookcase, a phalanx, a xylophone.

In the realm of verbs, finding English translations illustrating the COHERENT is difficult. If one can imagine the verb to glow to mean a series of flashes blurred one into another to create a continuous emanation, then glow versus flash might suffice. Perhaps a better illustration would be the difference between to buzz from to make a set of repeating noises.

COMPOSITE

The COMPOSITE configuration operates the same as the COHERENT above except that the individual members of the configurational set are not identical or physically similar to one another. Examples of words/concepts that would be translated using the COMPOSITE are a building (= a constructional set of walls, floors, doors, windows, etc.), a communications array, a conspiracy, a jungle thicket. Thus the Ithkuil words for recipe, skeleton, and melody would simply be the words for ingredient, bone, and musical note inflected for the COMPOSITE configuration. For verbs, the COMPOSITE versus COHERENT distinction would distinguish to rumble from to buzz, or to glitter from to glow.

- Formula(Building) = Walls + floors + doors + windows

ingredient	recipe
bone	skeleton
musical note	melody
composite	**coherent**
rumble	buzz
glitter	glow

MULTIFORM

The MULTIFORM configuration is the most difficult to explain, as there is no Western linguistic equivalent. The MULTIFORM serves to identify the noun as an individual member of a "fuzzy" set. A fuzzy set is a term which originates in non-traditional logic, describing a set whose individual members do not all share the same set-defining attributes to the same degree, i.e., while there may be one or more archetypical members of the set which display the defining attributes of the set exclusively and exactly, other members of the set may vary from this archetypical norm by a wide range of degrees, whether in physical resemblance, degree of cohesion or both. Indeed, some members of the set may display very little resemblance to the archetype and be closer to the archetype of a different fuzzy set, i.e., fuzzy sets allow for the idea of "gradient overlap" between members of differing sets.

It is difficult to accurately translate into English without resorting to paraphrase the sorts of concepts that Ithkuil easily expresses using the MULTIFORM. For example, the Ithkuil word for 'tree' inflected for the MULTIFORM configuration would mean something like a group of what appear to be trees, or better yet, a group of tree-like objects (i.e., some being trees, and others seeming less like trees). Essentially, any set of entities whose similarity of membership varies by different degrees in comparison to an archetypical member of the set can be expressed using the MULTIFORM. For examples, the Ithkuil word for library would simply be a word meaning something like work (i.e. thing authored/composed) inflected for the MULTIFORM, signifying a hodge-podge assortment of writings and compositions (e.g., including books, pamphlets, notebooks, ledgers, formulas, letters, journals, recordings, magazines, etc.). Other example concepts translatable using the MULTIFORM would be a rag-tag group of people, an incoherent pattern, lives in flux.

NOUN

UNIPLEX	DUPLEX	DISCRETE	AGGREGATIVE	SEGMENTATIVE	COMPONENTIAL	COHERENT	COMPOSITE	MULTIFORM
Tree			forest					
hole		area of holes						

UNIPLEX	DUPLEX	DISCRETE	AGGREGATIVE	SEGMENTATIVE	COMPONENTIAL	COHERENT	COMPOSITE	MULTIFORM
person	married couple	a group of soldiers	citizen	a line of dancers		phalanx		
	wings							

VERB

UNIPLEX	DUPLEX	DISCRETE	AGGREGATIVE	SEGMENTATIVE	COMPONENTIAL	COHERENT	COMPOSITE	MULTIFORM

CONFIGURATION	FORMULA	
UNIPLEX	A	MOLECULE
DUPLEX	AA	LUNGS
DISCRETE	AAAA	TISSUE
AGGREGATIVE	ABCD	
SEGMENTATIVE	A-A-A-A	
COMPONENTIAL	A-B-C-D	
COHERENT	X=A+A+A+A	
COMPOSITE	X=A+B+C+D	
MULTIFORM	X = A/B	

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Last update: **2024/08/28 17:47**