

Exercise: Esperanto morphology

Esperanto began life in the 19th century as a *planned* language—the linguistic creation of a single individual. It soon took on a life of its own, however, attracting an enduring community of speakers around the globe. After more than a century of daily use for everything from tourism to religious worship to child-rearing, Esperanto has developed into a living language with a vibrant literature and culture. There are now several generations of native speakers, and *Ethnologue* estimates a population of roughly two million L2 (second language) speakers.

The lexical and semantic evolution of the language has been dramatic and rapid, yet its synthetic, highly agglutinative morphology has remained remarkably stable. The examples used in this exercise are somewhat contrived—partly for their relatively straightforward English glosses, and partly to emphasize specific patterns in word formation. These same patterns, however, are productive across the lexicon.

The Esperanto alphabet is largely phonemic. Although it predates the International Phonetic Alphabet, it shares a close correspondence with the IPA's symbols. Where the two alphabets differ, the examples use Esperanto orthography: <ĉ>=[tʃ], <ĝ>=[dʒ], <ŝ>=[ʃ], <oj>=[oj], <aj>=[aj].

Section I

See if you can identify the morphemes used in the following examples; try to determine the rules that govern how they go together to form words. Do you notice any similarities or differences with other highly agglutinative languages we've seen so far, like Finnish or Turkish?

1	<i>ŝi manĝas</i>	she eats
2	<i>li manĝos pomon</i>	he will eat an apple
3	<i>eble li ĝin manĝis</i>	maybe he ate it
4	<i>ŝi trinkis kafon kaj legis libron</i>	she drank coffee and read a book
5	<i>manĝeblan pomon ruĝan ŝi manĝetis</i>	she snacked on an edible red apple
6	<i>li trinkegos en kafejo malhelan kafon</i>	he will guzzle dark coffee in a café
7	<i>junaj pomoj estas ruĝetaj</i>	young apples are slightly red
8	<i>maljuna libreto estis mallegebla</i>	a little old book was illegible
9	<i>pomegojn ruĝajn li tranĉos</i>	he'll cut large red apples
10	<i>li kaj ŝi relegis legeblajn librojn</i>	he and she re-read legible books
11	<i>ili lernas en hela ruĝa librejo</i>	they learn in a bright red library

(continued)

12	<i>lernejoj havas librojn</i>	schools have books
13	<i>ŝi ruĝigos lin</i>	she'll make him blush (turn him red)
14	<i>eble junulo ruĝiĝos</i>	perhaps a youngster will blush
15	<i>en malhela arbaro estas arbegoj maljunaj</i>	big old trees are in a dark forest
16	<i>etaj tranĉiloj estas akraj</i>	small knives are sharp
17	<i>malakra tranĉileto malrapide tranĉas pomojn</i>	a dull small knife cuts apples slowly
18	<i>eble li akriĝos ĝin</i>	maybe he will sharpen it
19	<i>ĝi iĝos akra</i>	it will become sharp
20	<i>manĝejo havas manĝilojn</i>	a lunchroom has cutlery
21	<i>manĝilarego</i>	a big set of eating utensils
22	<i>malrapida ŝipo rapidiĝis</i>	a slow ship sped up (became fast)
23	<i>li rapidegas</i>	he's (going) really fast
24	<i>ŝi estas rapidulo</i>	she's a speedster
25	<i>ŝipestro malrapidigos rapidan ŝipon</i>	a captain will slow down a quick ship
26	<i>rapidaj ŝipegoj remalrapidigos</i>	big speedy ships will slow down again
27	<i>egaj urboj havas urbanojn</i>	big cities have urbanites
28	<i>urbego havas urbestron</i>	a metropolis has a mayor
29	<i>estraro havas estraranojn</i>	a government has government-members
30	<i>tranĉilegojn havas ŝipanoj</i>	crewmen (of ships) have big knives
31	<i>manĝetas pomojn sanaj urbanoj</i>	healthy urbanites snack on apples
32	<i>pomo resanigos malsanulon</i>	an apple will make a sick person better
33	<i>malsanaj lernejoj saniĝis</i>	sick students became healthy
34	<i>ili resaniĝis en malsanulejo</i>	they recovered in a hospital

Section II

The English suffix “-er” has a variety of meanings, several of which are conveyed by distinct suffixes in Esperanto. (You’ve already encountered some of these in Section I.) Given the derivations below, see if you can figure out the specific meaning of each suffix.

1	<i>fremda</i> → <i>fremdulo</i>	foreign → a foreigner
2	<i>komputi</i> → <i>komputilo</i>	to compute → a computer
3	<i>kuri</i> → <i>kuranto</i>	to run → a runner
4	<i>Noujorko</i> → <i>noujorkano</i>	New York → a New Yorker
5	<i>ĝardeno</i> → <i>ĝardenisto</i>	a garden → a gardener

Here are the same morphemes again, this time in words whose English glosses *don’t* use “-er”:

6	<i>maljuna</i> → <i>maljunulo</i>	elderly → an “oldster”
7	<i>kudri</i> → <i>kudrilo</i>	to sew → a needle
8	<i>esperi</i> → <i>esperanto</i>	to hope → one who is hoping
9	<i>Kanado</i> → <i>Kanadano</i>	Canada → a Canadian
10	<i>dento</i> → <i>dentisto</i>	tooth → a dentist

-ul _____

-il _____

-ant _____

-an _____

-ist _____

Section III

How might you translate the following words? (Remember: a word in one language may not always have a simple equivalent in the other!)

a town (small city) _____

ilaro _____

ebligos _____

a ship’s crew (as a group) _____

schoolmaster _____

reakrigas _____

malsanegulo _____

mangîgîs _____

trinkebla _____

dentaro _____

a fleet (of ships) _____

etega _____