

Wikijunior

Languages

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Introduction

Just What Is a Language?

A language is an organised, ordered way of speaking and listening. Reading and writing are a way of representing language in a permanent format, but many languages have no written form. Language is one form of communication. It can be spoken, visual or signed. We can say that language is a code of symbols used to communicate.

What is not a language?

There are some things that work like language. For example, when you see a red traffic light, it is just the same as if somebody said to you "You should not cross the street now". The traffic signs work in the same way: drivers know when they have to turn left or right or to go slower. So they are a kind of communication system. Can we speak about "Traffic signs language"? Not really. Traffic signs work very well for some signals, but you can not say "I've eaten pizza today" by using traffic signs. The number of thoughts that you can express with them is limited. This is not the case for real languages. Using English, or Russian, or Japanese, you can express a wide variety of different thoughts. You can also express brand new thoughts can create brand new sentences and still be understood by your listeners.

Who Came Up With the Languages?

People didn't just decide one day to start speaking. Languages **developed** over time. In fact, the English spoken only six hundred years ago would be almost unrecognizable to us today!

language development - the steady growth and change of a language; languages took over a thousand years to get to what we speak today

Anthropologists have many different theories about how human language developed. Some animals have a wide range of calls which they make instinctively when they see food, potential threats, rivals or mates. It is possible that human language began as a refinement of these instinctive calls. It is also possible that early humans made sounds that imitated things that they heard in the natural world around them.

Studies of the fossils of early humans suggest that the shape of the vocal tract - the part of the throat where sounds are made - may have changed about 70,000 years ago in such a way as to enable early humans to make a much wider range of sounds. By the same time, humans had developed brains which were as large as modern humans. These developments would have allowed humans to think complex thoughts and communicate them. Archeologists note that signs of early human culture such as cave paintings and burial rituals appeared very quickly, suggesting that complex language and culture

emerged together over a short period of time. There is no way of knowing exactly what early human language was like as it emerged long before written records.

What is grammar? Why is it important?

Grammar is a set of rules on how you should use the words so everybody will understand what you really mean. If the words are bricks, then the grammar is a manual that explains how to make house of them. In the example above you see the two ways the grammar can work, that is by putting the words in certain sequence or by changing the words.

When you think about a language, you'll probably think about the words in the first place. It is logical: you hear words, you can "feel" them, while you don't feel grammar directly. But grammar is at least as important as the words are. You can not have a language with the words only but no grammar. Not convinced yet? Try the following example:

You have the following words: I, dad, my, love. Having only these words but no grammar, you can make a lot of combinations of them, like "I my dad love" or "My love I dad", but nobody will understand what you really mean. If you want everybody to understand exactly what you mean, you have to make the next sentence: "I love my dad". Thus the words have to stand in exact sequence.

Another example from English might be "Susan helped Tony." We can easily see how word order is important if we were to rearrange it to say "Tony helped Susan." This expresses a quite different idea, but uses the same words. So word order is important in English grammar.

This is not true of every language, though. Russian, for example, has a free word order. Changing the order of the words does not change the meaning of the sentence. How is this possible? Russian relies on markers to show which word is the subject and which is the object.

Why Not Just use One Language?

It may seem obvious to just create one language for everybody to use. Luckily, several **linguists** felt the same way. They made up what we call **constructed languages**. But, languages are a big part of a people's culture and identity and most of them have long interesting histories. People aren't willing to give them up. It is also very hard to become **fluent** in a language. It may seem natural to you to speak English, but it is actually very hard for many adults to learn.

linguist - someone who studies languages

constructed language - a language made up scientifically

fluency - being able to speak a language without any trouble

Many linguists believe that there was originally only one language. However, when people are isolated from each other for thousands of years, the language that they speak evolves. Over time, slight changes in how people spoke built up until different tribes could no longer understand each other.

Constructed Languages

Constructed languages are special languages. They aren't developed "naturally", but are created by people. People had various reasons to create new languages. Some thought an international language would help people from different countries to understand each other better and to have less conflicts. Esperanto is the best known example of this kind of language, and is the only constructed language to achieve a large number of speakers. Some estimates for the number of speakers of **Esperanto** are as high as 2 million.

Some constructed languages are a part of imaginary world, like Klingon, which was created specially for the science fiction series *Star Trek*. Fictional languages for different races in the Lord of the Rings trilogy have also been developed. There are even languages that were created without any purpose beyond being just for fun. Toki Pona is such a language.

Unique Languages

Some languages do not have any **tenses**. This means that there is only one way to say a **verb**. Imagine saying *I go to school yesterday*. In these languages, words like *yesterday* and *tomorrow* are used to say when you did something. Other languages even use pictures!

tense - a form of a verb that describes a time for an action; for example, "I went," "I am going", and "I will go" are in past, present, and future tense. They are different tenses because they describe when I did the action of going.

verb - a word that describes an action



Arabic

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The Arabic language consists of 28 letters, and has three long vowels which are part of the main alphabet. Short vowels or harakat are also used but are not considered part of the alphabet and are often left out of modern day newspapers and are used mostly in formal texts and to help those who are not as familiar with the Arabic language to pronounce the words properly. The Arabic language shares its letters loosely with Urdu and Farsi, although some letters may be different and there are some additional letters as well.

A sample of Arabic writing can be found [here](#).

How many people speak this language?

Arabic has 206 million native speakers and 24 million people speak it as a second language; making it the 5th most spoken language in the world.

Where is this language spoken?

Arabic is spoken across the Middle East, particularly in the Arabian Peninsula, as well as in North Africa, and in portions of Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa. Since Muslims believe the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, can only truly be read in Arabic, it is fairly common for people in other predominantly Islamic countries to understand religious words in Arabic.

While the Arabic used in the Qur'an is very complicated, it is still the standard for Arabic grammar today. However, most regions that speak Arabic have developed their own forms of the language that are used casually. This means that someone from Morocco who speaks Arabic might have trouble understanding someone from Iraq or Yemen unless they speak standard Arabic.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

The Prophet Muhammad, although he never wrote down the Qur'an, recited the Qur'an to people around Arabia, converting them to Islam. The Qur'an's texts are often considered the most beautiful and poetic verses of Arabic ever created.

What is the history of this language?

In the the third century B.C.E., Natabeans, a tribe of people in Asia, settled near in the north part of the Arabic Peninsula. They spoke a language very similar to Arabic, however they still wrote in an early language, Aramaic.

Modern Arabic first truly formed when Arabic and Amharic combined in the mid fourth century C.E. It stood out among other new Semitic Languages for its ability to not be overtaken by other, already existent, languages.

Around the sixth century C.E., Arabic "took over" another language found in the Arabic peninsula, Sabaic, because the chief religious text, the Qur'an, was written and spoken only in Arabic. Although Sabaic exists today as a spoken language, only a small number of people use it.



The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

- Ahlan means "Hello" أهلا
- Ma'a salama is said to say "Good Bye", but has a literal meaning of "Peace be with you". مع السلامة
- Ismee means "My name" إسمي
- Min fadlak means "Please" من فضلك
- Shukran means "Thank you" شكرا
- Uhibuki means "I love you" أحبك if you saying that to a girl.
- Uhibuka means "I love you" أحبك if you saying that to a boy.

أهلا

The Arabic letters for "Ahlan"

To introduce yourself you would say: "Ahlan, ana ismi" then your name ...أهلا ، أنا إسمي...

If you are saying hello to your friend you would say: "Ahlan ya" then your friends name

To ask someone their name you would say: "Ma ismik?" for a girl ؟ ما إسمك or "Ma ismak?" for a boy ؟ ما إسمك

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Chinese

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Chinese is written with *hànzì*, a picture-like writing system. However, many English-speaking students learn to pronounce Chinese (or "Zhong-wen") using a Romanization system called Pinyin. See below for some examples.

So how do characters work? Does Chinese have an alphabet? No, Chinese does not have an **alphabet**. They do use radicals, which will be explained below. **Characters** however, are written with strokes, or different lines. Strokes originally referred to ink calligraphic brushes used in ancient China. There are three types of characters: pictographic, ideographic, and picto-phonetic. Pictographic characters are just what they sound like, small drawings of pictures. For example, the character for sun (ri -which sounds like "zhirrr") looks somewhat like a sun. It is a 4 stroke character.

alphabet - all the letters of a language

character - a letter, number, or punctuation mark

Ideographic characters are used for things that are a bit more difficult to describe than with just a drawing. Love, hate, anger, happiness, goodness—all of these are very hard to crystallize with a picture. Ideographic characters try to address this problem by using different pictures to convey meaning. Going to back to the goodness example, the Chinese word for goodness, “hao”, is depicted using two separate characters—a woman and a child.

Picto-phonetic characters are characters that use pictures, like pictographic characters, only they hint at how the character sounds by including other similar-sounding characters within it. Sometimes these characters are radicals; other times they are simply other characters.

Radicals are the closest thing that Chinese has to what English speakers would call an alphabet. Radicals, like an alphabet, allow speakers to reuse portions of the language. And since Chinese has some 10,000 plus characters in usage, radicals become very useful to allow for fast memorization of a character. Characters will get some of their meaning and/or sound from a radical (like picto-phonetic characters). You can imagine radicals as a foundation, or base, of the Chinese language. It's sort of like combining Latin roots and our modern alphabet.

Are there different ways of writing Chinese? Yes, there are two ways of writing Chinese, simplified and traditional. Simplified was invented by the PRC (People's Republic of China) to increase literacy, or reading, levels in China. Traditional is as you can guess, the “traditional” way of writing Chinese. It is used in places such as Taiwan, which does not accept the PRC's rule. It is also used in traditional texts, paintings, genealogical charts, food packaging, and more! If you want to live in China, it is handy to know both simplified and traditional, as you are likely to run across both forms.

How many people speak this language?

Mandarin Chinese is the most common language in the world. In fact, 1.3 billion people speak this **dialect** of Chinese. That's about one out of every five people! However, like most languages, there are many other dialects, such as Taiwanese, Shanghainese, and Cantonese.

dialect - one form of a language; sometimes different regions of a country develop slightly different forms of a language, called dialects

Where is this language spoken?

Chinese is mostly spoken in the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (aka Taiwan). It is also one of the four official languages of Singapore (together with English, Malay, and Tamil).

What is the history of this language?

China has a history of five thousand years of continuous civilization, so it is probable that the Chinese language is at least as old as this. Archeologists have found Chinese pictographic writing on pottery, bones and turtle shells from as long ago as the Shang dynasty, over 3000 years ago. By the time of the Qin dynasty, 2000 years ago, Chinese writing had been standardized and it has changed very little since then.

Because Chinese is not an alphabetic language, it is hard to know exactly what the language sounded like in the distant past.

There are now five main spoken dialects of Chinese including Mandarin, Shanghainese and Cantonese. These are as different from each other as English and German and could be thought of as separate languages - but speakers of all the dialects use the same writing system.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Poets (in order of fame):

Li, Bai

Du, Fu

Wang, Wei

Tao, Yuanming

Authors (*in chronological order of birth*):

Sun, Wu (author of "The Art of War")

Li, Er (founder of Taoism)

Confucius (most influential philosopher in Korean, Chinese and Japanese societies)

Lu, Ji (author of "On Literature," a piece of literature criticism)

Liu, Xie (author of "Carving of a Dragon by a Literary Mind," a piece on literature aesthetics)

Chen, Duxiu (one of the main promoters of modern written Chinese language)

Lu, Xun (one of the most influential writers of the 20th century)

Hu, Shi (one of the main promoters of modern written Chinese language)

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Basic Greetings:

- 你好！ - Ni hao! - "Hello!"
- 再見！ - Zai jian! - "Good bye"
- 明天見！ - Mingtian jian! - "See you tomorrow!"
- 我的名子是霖達！ - Wo de ming zi jiao Linda! - "My name is Linda!"

Courtesies:

- 請您 - Qing nin - "Please may I ask (you)"
- 謝謝 - Xie xie - "Thank you."
- 不客氣 - Bu keqi - "Your welcome."
- 對不起 - Dui bu qi - "Sorry."
- 真對不起 - Zhen dui bu qi - "I'm very sorry."
- 沒關係 - Mei guanxi - "No problem, don't worry about it."

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Big Head

Characters (Simplified)	Characters (Traditional)	Pronunciation	English
大大	大頭大頭	Da tou da tou	Big head, big head
下雨不愁	下雨不愁	Xia yu bu chou	When it rains there is nothing to dread
你有雨	你有雨傘	Ni you yu san	You have an umbrella
我有大	我有大頭	Wo you da tou	I have my big head



Dutch

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Dutch uses the Latin alphabet, just like English, but 'ij' is sometimes treated as a single letter, equivalent to 'Y'. At the beginning of a place name, both letters are capitalized (e.g. IJsselmeer).

How many people speak this language?

About 25 million people speak Dutch.

Where is this language spoken?

The majority of Dutch speakers live in the Netherlands and the northern part of Belgium (Flanders). Dutch is also spoken in Aruba, Suriname, the Netherlands Antilles and a tiny corner of northern France. Dutch used to be spoken in Indonesia, which was a Dutch colony until 1942, but now only the older generation speak it.

Afrikaans, one of the languages of European settlers in Africa, is based on Dutch. Dutch migrants to the US and Australia, and more recently to Spain, France and Italy, often continue to use Dutch.



Dutch is spoken in Europe and in communities around the world.

What is the history of this language?

Scholars believe that Dutch became an independent language in about 600AD. Before it was just one of numerous West Germanic dialects.

The best known example of very old Dutch text is "*Hebban olla vogala nestas hagunnan, hinase hic enda tu, wat unbidan we nu*" ("All birds have started making nests, except me and you, what are we waiting for"). It was written around 1100. For a long time, scholars thought that it was the oldest Dutch text, but now an older text has been discovered: "*Visc flot aftar themo uuatare*" ("A fish was swimming in the water") and "*Gelobistu in got alamehtigan fadaer*" ("Do you believe in God the almighty father"). These were written around the year 900.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Groeten

Hoi/Hallo.
Goededag.
Goedeavond.
Goedenacht.
Hoe gaat het met je?
Wat kan ik voor u
doen?
Dank u wel.
Alstublieft.

Afscheid nemen

Tot ziens
Dag!
Vaarwel!

Greetings

Hi/Hello.
Good day.
Good evening.
Good night.
How are you?
What can I do for you?
Thank you.
Please.

Good-byes

Goodbye!
Goodbye!
Farewell!

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

In Dutch:

*Je bent de zon,
Je bent de zee,
Je bent de liefde,
Ga nu met mij mee*

In English:

*You are the sun,
You are the sea,
You are the love,
Now go together with me*



English

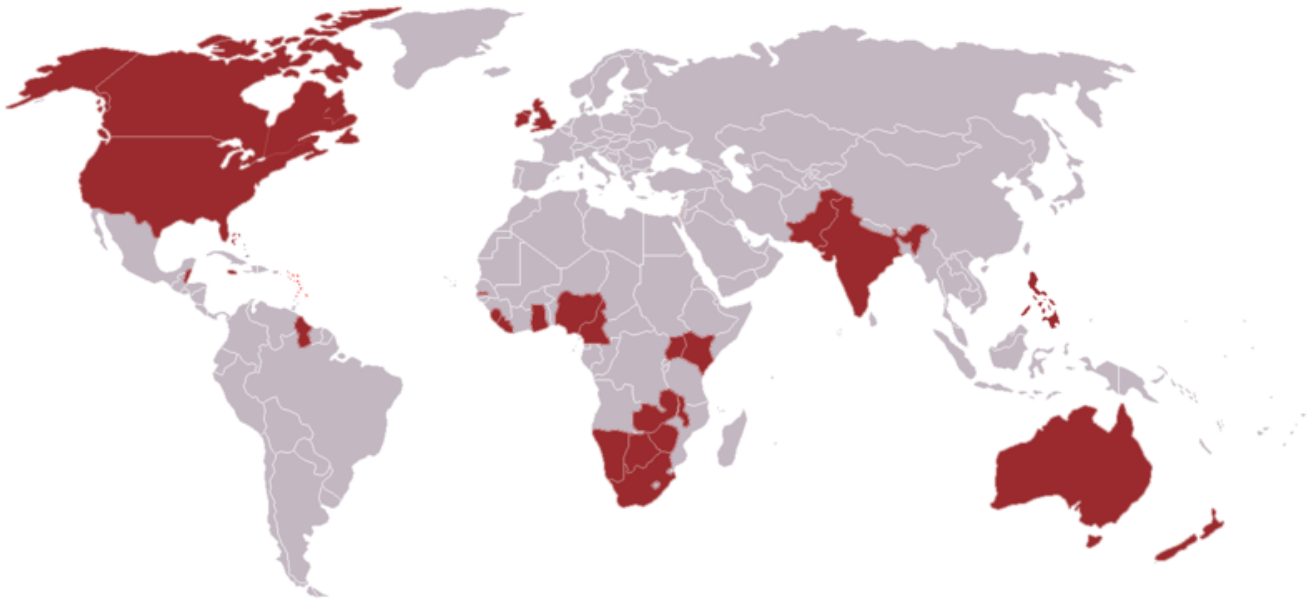
What writing system(s) does this language use?

English uses the Italian alphabet, which was originally used in Latin. Today, it is used in almost all European languages.

How many people speak this language?

380 million learned English as children. But possibly one billion people have learned the language as adults. Overall, English is the second most widely spoken language in the world, after Chinese.

Where is this language spoken?



What is the history of this language?

The oldest form of English is called Old English, or Anglo-Saxon. Old English looks very different from the English spoken today and for the most part is not understandable by speakers of Modern English.

Here is an example of Old English from "Beowulf":

Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,
þeodcyninga, þrym gefrunon,
hu ða æþelingas ellen fremedon.
Oft Scyld Scefing sceaþena þreatum

Old English later became Middle English which is much more like Modern English.

Here's an example of the Middle English spoken during the 1300s, from Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*:

Bifil that in that seson, on a day,
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
At nyght was come into that hostelrye
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle,
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.



Geoffrey Chaucer

In the 1500s, William Shakespeare played a large part in the creation of modern English. Both Shakespeare and Chaucer wrote in the English **vernacular**. Before them, most important works were written in Latin, or sometimes French. Latin was considered a professional language that scholars used. Chaucer and Shakespeare were some of the first to write important stories in English.

vernacular - the native language of a country

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

William Shakespeare, who wrote in **verse**, is the author of dozens of plays and over a hundred sonnets. Many popular English **prose** authors, such as Mary Shelley, the author of *Frankenstein*, Jane Austin, the author of *Pride and Prejudice*, and Charles Dickens, the author of *A Tale of Two Cities*, come from the Romantic and Victorian eras, which were during the 1800s.

verse - writing in poetic form; writing not in sentences

prose - writing in sentence form; the opposite of verse

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Esperanto

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Esperanto uses the Latin alphabet, but does not use letters q, w, x, y. Esperanto also has six special letters: ĉ (like ch in **chair**), ĝ (like j in **John**), ĥ (like ordinary English h, but in Esperanto h is pronounced harder), ĵ (like s in **treasure**), ŝ (like sh in **fish**) and ŭ (like w in **why**). Now, there is a kind of a problem: ordinary keyboards don't have them! Esperanto-speakers solve it by putting x after the letter, so cx means the same as ĉ. There is no danger to read the word wrong since x is normally not used in Esperanto.

How many people speak this language?

The answer is: nobody really knows. There are no exact numbers. It is most likely that there are between one-hundred-thousand and two-million Esperanto-speakers. Most of them have learned to speak it, only about one-thousand people speak Esperanto as native language.

Where is this language spoken?

Esperanto is spoken all over the world. Really! But nowhere is it the language of the majority of people. Esperanto-speakers live in the same places as speakers of other languages.

What is the history of this language?

Unlike most other languages, we know almost exactly when and where Esperanto was born. Esperanto was constructed (therefore it is a constructed language) by Polish eye doctor Ludovic Zamenhof. That means he created the language himself. He published the first book about Esperanto in 1887. Originally the language had no name it was simply called "international language". Esperanto, which means "He who hopes" was a nickname of Zamenhof, but later it became the name of the language itself.



Ludovic Zamenhov

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

The first author to write in Esperanto was Zamenhof himself.

Other known Esperanto authors are William Auld, Julio Baghy, Kálmán Kalocsay, Mauro Nervi.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

- hello - saluton
- good-bye - ĝis la revido
- yes - jes
- no - ne

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

"La Espero" ("The Hope") is the traditional anthem of Esperanto. It was written by Zamenhof as a poem and later set to music. This is the first verse:

La Espero

Esperanto

En la mondon venis nova sento,
tra la mondo iras forta voko;
per flugiloj de facila vento
nun de loko flugu ĝi al loko
Ne al glavo sangon soifanta
ĝi la homan tiras familion:
al la mond' eterne militanta
ĝi promesas sanktan
harmonion.

English

Into the world came a new feeling,
through the world goes a powerful
call;
by means of wings of a gentle wind
now let it fly from place to place.
Not to the sword thirsting for blood
does it draw the human family:
to the world eternally fighting
it promises sacred harmony.



Estonian

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Estonian uses the Latin Alphabet, however it has 4 extra vowel umlaut letters, which are: Õ/õ, Ä/ä, Ö/ö, Ü/ü.

How many people speak this language?

One million people speak Estonian, most of whom live in Estonia. There are other places where it is spoken. (See the section below for that information)

Where is this language spoken?

Estonian is spoken primarily in:

- Estonia

As a minority language in:

- Finland
- Russia

What is the history of this language?

It is believed that the Baltic-Finnic languages evolved from a proto-Finnic language, from which Sami was separated around 1500-1000 BC. It has been suggested that this proto-Finnic had three dialects: northern, southern and eastern. The Baltic-Finnic languages separated around the 1st century, but continued influencing each other. You might see southwestern Finnish dialects have many genuine Estonian influences.

Around 15th century The nothen Estonian was at the great cultural influence of German. The wise German monks wanted to bring the God closer to the native people, so thay invented Estonian literal language. It was based on German alphbet and one charecter "Õ/õ" was added. As the time passed, meny words that where borrowed form the German, coaleased. This was the begining of enlightment.

When the Estonian declared themselves a nation, at the beginning of the 20th centurey, the country went blumeing. For the first time thay could express themselves freely. This was the golden age of Estonia, the language was evolved greatly.

The II World War ended the golden age, forces from the east marched in, took the power, and Estonian was denied to be spoken and tought. At that time meany changes where made, even the structure of centence was changed - the verb was put at the beginning of the centence. (Not like it is in German).

When estonian people got the power back, Soviet Union was disunified, and the democratical nation was declared for second time, the cultural shield was broken. New inforamation came in. Lots of slang word and frases came in form english and english speaking countries. Now... To be continued

Intresting fact

Finnish and Estonian are closely related languages. It's been said that nothern Estonians can even understand what is being said by Finnish people, even if thay have never learned Finnish before. This could easily be true in many cases.

Remarkably it isn't 2 way, Finnish have to put alot more of effort in learning Estonian, then Estonian to Finnish.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Anton Hansen Tammsaare

Friedebert Tuglas

Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald

Johann Voldemar Jannsen

Jaan Kross

Lennart Meri

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Vastusd

Jah
Ei
Võibolla

Tervitused

Tere
Tere hommikust
Tere päevast
Head ööd
Mis lahti?
Mis toimub?
Mitte palju.

Hüvastijätud

Headaga.
Hüvasti.
Näeme homme.
Hoiame ühendust.
Peatse jälleenägemiseni.

Kasulikud fraasid

Kas te võiksite juhatada mind tualettruumi?
(polite)
Kus on tualettruum?
Kui palju see maksab?
Ma tahan piima.
Sa meeldid mulle.
Mu koer sõi mu kodutöö.

Ja...

Õlu
Lahe
Öö
Jää
Kutt
Naised
Hea
Halb
Ma armastan sind

Responses

Yes
No
Maybe

Greetings

Hello
Good morning
Good afternoon
Good night
What's up?
What's going on?
Not much.

Good-byes

Good-bye.
Bye.
See you tomorrow.
Keep in touch.
See you soon.

Useful phrases

Could you tell me where the bathroom is?
Where is the bathroom?
How much does it cost?
I want a milk.
I like you.
My dog ate my homework.

And...

Beer
Cool
Night
Ice
Dude
Females
Good
Bad
I love you

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

At Christmas time, you might like to sing Christmas carols about your tree. The Estonians do, too. This song is originally called "O Tannenbaum", but it's called "Oh kuusepuu" in Estonian. It has also been translated into English. The song was first written by Ernst Anschütz in 1824.

Here is the original German song, O Tannenbaum's first verse:

"Oh kuusepuu"

Oh kuusepuu, oh kuusepuu

Kui haljad on su oksad!

Ei mitte üksi suisel a'alal.

Vaid talvel ka siin külmal maal

Oh kuusepuu, oh kuusepuu

Kui haljad on su oksad!

"O Christmas Tree"

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree!

How are thy leaves so verdant!

Not only in the summertime,

But even in winter is thy prime.

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree,

How are thy leaves so verdant!



Finnish

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Finnish uses the Latin Alphabet, however it has 3 extra letters, which are: Å/å, Ä/ä, and Ö/ö.

How many people speak this language?

Six million people speak Finnish, most of whom live in Finland. There are other places where it is spoken. (See the section below for that information)

Where is this language spoken?

Finnish is spoken primarily in:

- Finland

As a minority languages in:

- Estonia
- Sweden
- Norway
- Russia

What is the history of this language?

It is believed that the Baltic-Finnic languages evolved from a proto-Finnic language, from which Sami was separated around 1500–1000 BC. It has been suggested that this proto-Finnic had three dialects: northern, southern and eastern. The Baltic-Finnic languages separated around the 1st century, but continued influencing each other. Therefore, the Eastern Finnish dialects are genetically Eastern proto-Finnic, with many Eastern features, and the Southwestern Finnish dialects have many genuine Estonian influences.

Written Finnish did not exist until created by Mikael Agricola, a Finnish bishop in the 16th century. He based his orthography (writing rules) on Swedish, German, and Latin. Later, the written form was revised by many people. It was somewhat different from contemporary Finnish orthography as different letters (such as c, x, q, and w – nowadays much less common) were used.

The Reformation marked the real beginning of writing in Finnish. In the 16th century, major literary achievements were composed in Finnish by people like Paavali Juusten, Erik Sorolainen, and Jaakko Finno, as well as Agricola himself. In the 17th century, books produced in Finland were written in Finnish, Danish, Norwegian, Estonian, German, and Swedish. However, the most important books were still written in Latin. Finnish and Swedish were small languages of lesser importance.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

- Eino Leino
- J.L. Runeberg
- Tommy Tabermann
- Edith Södergran
- L. Onerva
- A.W. Yrjänä
- Jari Tervo
- Mika Waltari
- Minna Canth
- Aleksis Kivi
- Elias Lönnrot
- Tove Jansson
- Pirkko Saisio

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Tervehdyksiä

Moi!
Terve!
Huomenta!
Hyvää yötä!
Mitä kuuluu?
Hyvää.

Greetings

Hi!
Hello!
Good morning!
Good night!
How are you?
I'm fine.

Hyvästejä

Hei hei!
Heippa!
Nähdään huomenna!
Nähdään!
Nähdään pian!

Good-byes

Bye-bye!
Good-bye!
See you tomorrow!
See you!
See you soon!

Yksinkertaisia ilmaisuja

Puhutko englantia?
Missä vessa on?
Voisitko puhua hitaammin?
Paljonko se maksaa?
Pidän...
En pidä...
Minun nimeni on...

Basic phrases

Do you speak English?
Where is the bathroom?
Could you speak slower please?
How much does it cost?
I like...
I don't like...
My name is...

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Mustan kissan paksut posket.	Lit. <i>Thick cheeks of a black cat.</i> (Children's poem - language learning; to help distinguish between the pronunciation of '-ks-' and '-sk-'.)
Ärrän kierrän orren ympäri, ässän pistän taskuun.	Lit. <i>The R I shall put around a beam, the S I shall put in my pocket.</i> (Children's poem; double consonants.)
Vesihiisi sihiisi hississä.	Lit. <i>The water demon hissed in the elevator.</i> (Children's poem.)



French

What writing system(s) does this language use?

French uses the Roman alphabet just as English does.

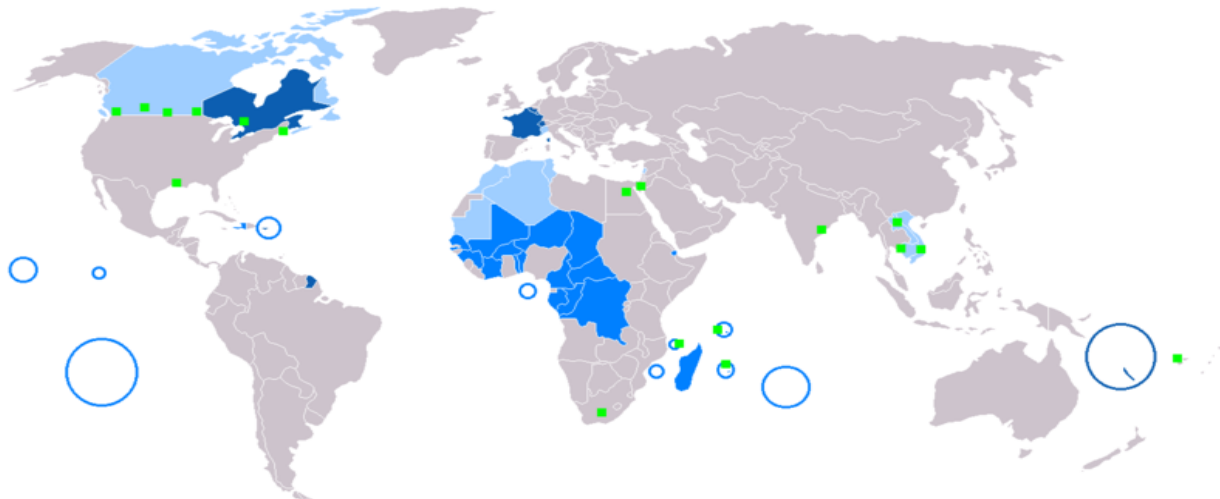
How many people speak this language?

There are 87 million people who can speak French **natively**. But there 182 million French speakers total, which means that 95 million people decided to learn the language as adults! This is because there is a lot of interesting **literature** in French. French is also a language often used in diplomacy.

native speaker - someone who learned to speak a language as a child

literature - books, like the one you are reading now

Where is this language spoken?



As you probably already figured out, French was first spoken in France. Three of France's neighbors -- Belgium, Switzerland, and Luxembourg -- also use French as one of their official languages. And because of **colonization**, French is spoken in Canada (the majority in Québec), Louisiana, and Africa.

colonization - going to and conquering other countries in order to live there; because England colonized America, most people in America now speak English.

What is the history of this language?

French was created from the Latin language, just like Spanish, Italian, Portuguese and Romanian. It was first used by the **Franks**, a people who lived in what we now call France. In the 1600s, French people came to Canada and settled in the area we now call **Québec**. Some French people (who were expelled from Canada) also settled in **Louisiana**, which was named in honor of King Louis XIV of France. Louisiana is now a state of the United States. In the 1800s, France conquered large parts of northern, western and central **Africa**, mostly in the Sahara desert. As France took over ruling these territories and their populations, they established French as the language of instruction in schools, and as the official language of the government. Over time, French became the second native language of many African people, although local languages are still used most often in the home. Although France no longer rules these former colonies, they still use French in daily life.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

- Victor Hugo (1802 - 1885)
- Alexandre Dumas (1802 - 1870)
- Jules Verne (1828 - 1905)
- Francois Marie Arouet/Voltaire(1694 - 1778)

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Les salutations

Salut
Bonjour
Bonsoir
Bonne nuit
Quoi de neuf ?
Pas grand chose.

Les adieux

Au revoir.
À demain.
À tout à l'heure.
À bientôt.

Phrases de base

Parlez-vous anglais?
Où sont les toilettes?
Plus lentement, s'il vous plaît.
J'aime . . .
Je n'aime pas . . .
Je m'appelle. . .

Greetings

Hi/Bye
Hello
Good evening
Good night
What's up?
Not much.

Good-byes

Good-bye.
See you tomorrow.
See you!
See you soon.

Basic phrases

Do you speak English?
Where is the bathroom?
(Speak) slower please.
I like . . .
I don't like . . .
My name is. . .

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Petit Papa Noël

Petit Papa Noël	Little Santa Claus
Quand tu descendras du ciel	When you come down from the sky
Avec des jouets par milliers	With toys in the thousands
N'oublie pas mes petits souliers	Don't forget my little shoes
Mais avant de partir	But before leaving
Il faudra bien te couvrir	It will be necessary to cover you
Dehors tu vas avoir si froid	Outside you will be so cold
C'est un peu à cause de moi	It's a little because of me

Dame Tartine

Il était une Dame Tartine	There once was a Dame Tartine (<i>tartine is a kind of sandwich</i>)
Dans un beau palais de beurre frais.	Who lived in a beautiful palace of fresh butter.
La muraille était de praline,	The walls were made of praline,
Le parquet était de croquets,	The floors were of croquettes,
La chambre à coucher	The bedroom
De crème de lait,	Of fresh cream,
Le lit de biscuit,	The bed, a biscuit,
Les rideaux d'anis.	And curtains of anise.

Frère Jacques

Frère Jacques, Frère Jacques	Are you sleeping, are you sleeping?
Dormez-vous, Dormez-vous?	Brother John, Brother John.
Sonnez les matines, Sonnez les matines.	Morning bells are ringing, morning bells are ringing.
Ding, ding, dong. Ding, ding, dong.	

This song can be sung as a 'round', which is when one person or group starts the song, and when they arrive at the end of the first verse, the second person or group begins.

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German

What writing system(s) does this language use?

German uses the Latin alphabet just like English, French, and Spanish, with one extra letter, the **eszett**, which is pronounced "ss". It also has **umlauts**, which are not pronounced in English.

eszett - A letter which is only found in the German alphabet, it looks like this: **ß**

umlauts - Three German alphabet vowels that have two dots above them, they look like this: **Ää, Öö, Üü**

How many people speak this language?

About 110 million speakers speak German natively. However another 120 million speak it as a second language, these people chose to learn it, they are not **native speakers** of the language.

native speaker - someone who learned to speak a language as a child

Where is this language spoken?

German is spoken primarily in:

- Germany
- Austria
- Switzerland (beside 3 other official languages)
- Liechtenstein

As a minority languages in:

- Luxembourg
- France
- Belgium
- The Netherlands
- Namibia
- Denmark



German is spoken widely in Europe and in communities around the world.

And in small communities all over the world! German is also the most spoken language in Europe, and 10th in the whole world!

What is the history of this language?

The history of the German language begins with the High German consonant shift during the Migration period, separating South Germanic dialects from common West Germanic. As Germany was divided into many different states, the only force working for a unification of German during a period of several hundred years was the general preference of writers trying to write in a way that could be understood in the largest possible area. When Martin Luther translated the Bible, he based his translation mainly on this already developed language, which was the most widely understood language at this time. It took until the middle of the 18th century to create a standard that was widely accepted, thus ending the period of Early New High German. Until about 1800, standard German was almost only a written language. At this time, people in urban northern Germany, who spoke dialects very different from Standard German, learnt it almost like a foreign language and tried to pronounce it as close to the spelling as possible. Prescriptive pronunciation guides used to consider northern German pronunciation to be the standard. However, the actual pronunciation of standard German varies from region to region. Media and written works are almost all produced in standard German (often called Hochdeutsch in German) which is understood in all areas where German is spoken, except by pre-school children in areas which speak only dialect, for example Switzerland. However, in this age of television, even they now usually learn to understand Standard German before school age. The first dictionary of the Brothers Grimm, the 16 parts of which were issued between 1852 and 1860. Official revisions of some of these rules were not issued until 1998, when the German spelling reform of 1996 was officially promulgated by governmental representatives of all German-speaking countries.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Some famous authors and poets in this language include the *Grimm brothers*, *Schiller* & *Goethe*.

The Brothers Grimm (Jacob; 1785 - 1863, Wilhelm; 1786 - 1859) were Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, German professors who were best known for publishing collections of authentic folk tales and fairy tales. Their fairy tales are very famous, mostly because Disney made animated movies based on three of them: Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White. Many of the other fairy tales are very famous, and untouched by Disney. These include Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Rumpelstiltskin, and Rapunzel.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller (November 10, 1759 – May 9, 1805) was a German poet, philosopher, historian, and dramatist. His childhood and youth were spent in relative poverty, although he attended both village and Latin schools. He eventually studied medicine. At school, he wrote his first play, *The Robbers*, about a group of naïve revolutionaries and their tragic failure. In 1780, he obtained a post as regimental doctor in Stuttgart. Following the performance of *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*) in Mannheim, in 1781 he was arrested and forbidden to publish any further works. He fled Stuttgart in 1783, coming via Leipzig and Dresden to Weimar in 1787. In 1789, he was appointed professor of History and Philosophy in Jena, where he wrote only historical works. He returned to Weimar in 1799, where Goethe convinced him to return to playwriting. He and Goethe founded the Weimar Theater which became the leading theater in Germany, leading to a dramatic renaissance. He remained in Weimar, Saxe-Weimar until his death at 45 from tuberculosis.

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (28 August 1749–22 March 1832) was a German polymath: he was a painter, novelist, dramatist, poet, humanist, scientist, philosopher, and for ten years chief minister of state at Weimar. Goethe was one of the paramount figures of German literature and the movement of German classicism in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. This movement coincides with Enlightenment, Sturm und Drang, Sensibility ("Empfindsamkeit"), and Romanticism, in all of which he participated to varying degrees. As the author of *Faust* and *Theory of Colours*, Goethe's influence spread across Europe, and for the next century, his works were a primary source of inspiration in music, drama, poetry, and even philosophy.

German is also the language of classical music, as it was the language of *Mozart*, *Beethoven*, and *Bach* just to name a few. Read on for more detail on these artists...

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (January 27, 1756 – December 5, 1791) is among the most significant and enduringly popular composers of European classical music. His enormous output includes works that are widely acknowledged as pinnacles of symphonic, chamber, piano, operatic, and choral music. Many of his works are part of the standard concert repertory and are widely recognized as masterpieces of the classical style.

Johann Sebastian Bach (21 March 1685 – 28 July 1750) was a prolific German composer and organist whose sacred and secular works for choir, orchestra and solo instruments drew together almost all of the strands of the Baroque style and brought it to its ultimate maturity. Although he introduced no new musical forms, he enriched the prevailing German style with a robust and dazzling contrapuntal technique, a seemingly effortless control of harmonic and motivic organization from the smallest to the largest scales, and the adaptation of rhythms and textures from abroad, particularly Italy and France.

Ludwig van Beethoven (December 17, 1770 – March 26, 1827) was a German composer of classical music, who lived predominantly in Vienna, Austria. Beethoven is widely regarded as one of history's supreme composers, and he produced notable works even after losing his hearing. He was one of the greatest figures in the transitional period between the Classical and Romantic eras in music. His reputation has inspired — and in many cases intimidated — composers, musicians, and audiences who were to come after him.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Greetings

Hi/Hello

Good morning

Good day

Good evening

Good night

(Die) Begrüßungen

Hi/Hallo

Guten Morgen

Guten Tag

Guten Abend

Gute Nacht

Good-byes

Later!

Goodbye!

See you soon!

Abschied

Tschüß!

Auf Wiedersehen!

Bis Bald!

Basic Phases

Do you speak English?

Where is the
bathroom?

Excuse me

How are you?

I like ...

I don't like ...

My name is ...

Grundlegende Phasen

Sprechen Sie Englisch?

Wo ist die Toilette?

Entschuldigung

Wie geht's?

Ich mag ...

Ich mag ... nicht.

Ich heiße.../Mein Name ist...

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

At Christmas time, you might like to sing Christmas carols about your tree. The Germans do, too. They have a song called "O Tannenbaum" which has also been translated into English. The song was first written by Ernst Anschütz in 1824.

Here is the original German song, O Tannenbaum:

O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum, wie grün sind deine Blätter! Du grünst nicht nur zur Sommerzeit, Nein auch im Winter, wenn es schneit. O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum, wie treu sind deine Blätter! O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum! Du kannst mir sehr gefallen! Wie oft hat nicht zur Weihnachtszeit Ein Baum von dir mich hoch erfreut! O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum! Du kannst mir sehr gefallen! O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum! Dein Kleid will mich was lehren: Die Hoffnung und Beständigkeit Gibt Trost und Kraft zu jeder Zeit. O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum! Das soll dein Kleid mich lehren.

It is known as "O Christmas Tree" in English and is a very famous song. Here is the English version of the song:

O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree! How are thy leaves so verdant! O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, How are thy leaves so verdant! Not only in the summertime, But even in winter is thy prime. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, How are thy leaves so verdant! O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Much pleasure doth thou bring me! O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Much pleasure doth thou bring me! For every year the Christmas tree, Brings to us all both joy and glee. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Much pleasure doth thou bring me! O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Thy candles shine out brightly! O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Thy candles shine out brightly! Each bough doth hold its tiny light, That makes each toy to sparkle bright. O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree, Thy candles shine out brightly!



Greek

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Greek has used the Greek alphabet, the first to introduce the concept of a **vowel**, since the 9th century B.C. Before this, it used Linear B and the Cypriot syllabaries. A sample of Greek writing can be found [here](#).

vowel - A, E, I, O, U in English

How many people speak this language?

About 15 million people speak Greek.

Where is this language spoken?

Greek is spoken mostly in Greece and Cyprus (EU language) but some people speak Greek in Bulgaria, Albania and Turkey. Greek is also spoken by millions of Greeks who live in the U.S, in European countries, Australia, and in various African countries.

What is the history of this language?

Ancient Greek was the language of the Ancient Greek empire. It was similar to Modern Greek to read, but pronounced very differently. It gradually evolved into Modern Greek over time - it is one of the only languages to have a continuous history for more than 2000 years!

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Greek literature has a continuous history of some 3000 years.

Homer who wrote the Iliad and the Odyssey. (Classical Greek)

Vitsentzos Kornaros who wrote Erotokritos. (Modern Greek)

Dionysios Solomos who wrote Ύμνος Στην Ελευθερία (Hymn to Freedom) the poem that became modern Greece's National Anthem: "Απ' τα κόκκαλα βγαλμένη, των Ελλήνων τα ιερά, και σαν πρώτα ανδριωμένη, χαίρε, ω χαίρε λευτεριά"

Andreas Kalvos

Costis Palamas

Constantine Cavafy

Nikos Kazantzakis

Giorgos Seferis, winner of the 1963 Nobel Prize for Literature

Odysseus Elytis, winner of the 1979 Nobel Prize for Literature

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Χαιρετισμοί

Γεια σου(singular) / Γεια σας(plural)

Χαίρετε

Καλημέρα

Καλησπέρα

Καληνύχτα

Αποχαιρετισμοί

Γεια σου(singular) / Γεια σας(plural)

Χαίρετε

Τα λέμε (άυριο)

Στο επανειδεν

Άλλα

Ευχαριστώ (πολύ)

Σε ευχαριστώ(singular) /Σας
ευχαριστώ(plural)

Παρακαλώ

Συγνώμη

Ναι/Όχι

Greetings

Hello (informal, literally "health")

Hello (formal, literally "happiness")

Good morning

Good evening

Good night

Good-byes

Good-bye (informal, literally "health")

Good-bye (formal, literally
"happiness")

See you (tomorrow)

See you (formal)

Other

Thanks (a lot)

Thank you

Please

Sorry

Yes/No

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Here is a Greek version of The Boy Who Cried Wolf, by Chambry. It was translated in 1925-6.

Ποιμὴν παίζων.

Καὶ που παιδίον ποιμνία νέμον ἐφ' ὕψηλοῦ τόπου ἰστάμενον πολλάκις ἀνέκραγε· Βοηθεῖτέ μοι, λύκοι. Οἱ δὲ ἀγρότεροι τρέχοντες ἐν τῇ ποιμνῇ τοῦτον ἠΐρῃσκον μηδαμῶς ἀληθεύοντα. Τοῦτο δὲ πολλάκις τοῦ παιδὸς πραξαμένου, οἱ τοιοῦτοι συνήρχοντο καὶ αἰεὶ ψεῦδος εὐρίσκοντες ἀπήρχοντο. Μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα τοῦ λύκου προσελθόντος, ὁ παῖς ἐβόα· Ὁ λύκος, δεῦτε. Ἐπεὶ δὲ οὐδεὶς ἐπίστευεν οὐδ' ἀπήρχετο βοηθῆσαι, ὁ λύκος ἀδείας λαβόμενος, εὐκόλως τὴν ποιμνὴν πᾶσαν διέφθειρεν. Ὁ μῦθος δηλοῖ ὅτι τοσοῦτον οὐκ ὠφελεῖ τινα τὸ μὴ λαλεῖν τὰ ἀληθῆ ὅσον δεῖ φοβεῖσθαι μήπως ἐκ τούτου οὐδὲ τὰ ἀληθῆ λέγων εἰσακούσθη.

And here is the English version by Perry. It is fable 210.

The Boy Who Cried "Wolf"

There was a boy tending the sheep who would continually go up to the embankment and shout, 'Help, there's a wolf!' The farmers would all come running only to find out that what the boy said was not true. Then one day there really was a wolf but when the boy shouted, they didn't believe him and no one came to his aid. The whole flock was eaten by the wolf. The story shows that this is how liars are rewarded: even if they tell the truth, no one believes them.

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Hebrew

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Hebrew uses a right-to-left abjad system. The Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-four letters and five final letters, and is derived from the **Aramaic alphabet**, which in its turn came from the **Phoenician alphabet**, the source of most writing systems known today. In Hebrew, instead of having each letter make one sound, each letter makes a sound and a vowel. You can find an example of the writing system [here](#).

How many people speak this language?

Approximately 7 million people speak Hebrew.

Where is this language spoken?

Hebrew is spoken almost all over the world, and is an official language in Israel.

What is the history of this language?

Hebrew is a very old language. It was the language used to write the Old Testament of the Bible, and was spoken in the middle east. It gradually stopped being a spoken language, until it was revived by Eliezer ben-Yehuda at around the beginning of the 20th century.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Basic Greetings:

- שלום - Shalom - Hello!\Good Bye (Literally means "Peace", and is more commonly used as "Hello" than "Good Bye")
- בוקר טוב - Boker Tov - Good Morning
- ערב טוב - Erev Tov - Good Evening
- לילה טוב - Laila Tov - Good Night
- להתראות - Lehitraot - See you later (Sometimes shortened to "להית" - "Lehit")
- מה נשמע? - Ma nishma? - How are you?
- הכל בסדר - Hakol Beseder - Everything is fine

Simple Words

- כן - Ken - Yes
- לא - Lo - No
- אימא - Ima - Mother
- אבא - Aba - Father
- כלב - Kelev - Dog
- חתול - *Khatul - Cat

Courtesies

- תודה - Toda - Thank you
- סליחה - Slikha - Excuse me \ I'm sorry
- בבקשה - Bevakasha - Please \ Here you go
- the sound of 'kh' is like a 'h' coming from the back of your throat

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Little Yonatan*

Hebrew Characters	Pronunciation	English
יונתן הקטן	Yonatan hakatan	Little Jonathan
רץ בבוקר אל הגן	Rats baboker el hagan	Ran in the Morning to the park
הוא טיפס על העץ	Hu tipes al ha'ets	He climbed up on the tree
אפרוחים חיפש	Efrokhim khipes	Looking for some baby birds
אוי ואבוי לו לשובב	Oi vavoi lo lashovav	But the mischievous little child
חור גדול במכנסיו	Khor gadol bemihnasav	Tore up his pants
הוא טיפס על העץ	Hu tipes al ha'ets	He climbed up on the tree
אפרוחים חיפש	Efrokhim khipes	Looking for some baby birds

- Yonatan - a common Hebrew name - its English equivalent is "Jonathan"

A song for the Rain

Hebrew Characters	Pronunciation	English
גשם, גשם משמיים	Geshem, geshem	Rain drops, Rain drops from the sky
כל היום טיפות המים	mishamaim	
טיף-טיף-טיף	Kol hayom tipot hamaim	All day long the Rain drops
טיף-טיף-טיף	Tif-Tif-Taf	Tif-Tif-Taf*
מחאו כף אל כף	Tif-Tif-Taf	Tif-Tif-Taf
	Makhau kaf el kaf	Clap your hands together

- Tif-Tif-Taf - the sound of Rain drops in Hebrew



Hindi

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Hindi does not use Latin characters like the English you are reading, but instead uses a script called *devanagari*. Devanagari is a type of writing system, called an abugida, where the base character is a syllable that includes a consonant and a vowel. The first consonant in devanagari is क, which stands for the sound "ka". The character can be changed to use different vowels. For example का कि की कु कू के कै को कौ are the k character with each of the main vowels in Hindi. There is also a different form of the vowels when they appear at the beginning of a word or as the second of a pair of vowels. The basic vowels are अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ए ऐ ओ and औ.

How many people speak this language?

There are varying estimates for how many people speak Hindi, claimed to be spoken by the second to fourth most number of people of any language. The number varies depending on whether very closely related dialects are included or not. Estimates range from 340 million to 500 million speakers, and as many as 800 million people may understand the language. Hindi is also closely related to the language Urdu, and speakers of the everyday form of the languages can usually understand each other. There are 60 to 100 million speakers of Urdu.

Where is this language spoken?

Almost all speakers of Hindi live in India or Nepal, though Hindi can be found all over the world where it's speakers have moved to. Countries outside of India and Nepal with a significant number of speakers are South Africa, Mauritius, the United Kingdom, the United States, Yemen, and Uganda.

What is the history of this language?

Hindi has its roots in the ancient language of Sanskrit. The spoken language changed over the centuries from the Old Indo-Aryan such as Sanskrit to Middle Indo-Aryan Prakrit languages. Eventually Middle Indo-Aryan became what many researchers refer to as Apabhramshas, which sometime around 1000 A.D. were developing into the dialects and languages of today's northern India, including Hindi. Hindi contains a significant number of words from Persian and Arabic origins, stemming from the Persian people that ruled much of northern India for centuries.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Tulsidas wrote twelve books and is considered the greatest and most famous of Hindi poets. He lived from 1532 to 1623. Premchand is one of the greatest literary figures of modern Hindi and Urdu literature. He lived from 1880 to 1936. Most of the early Hindi literature was in verse form, like poetry.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Hindi word - Latin version of the word - English translation

- नमस्ते - namaste - hello, good morning, afternoon, etc, and goodbye.
- आप कैसे हैं? - aap kaise hain? - How are you?
- मैं ठीक हूँ, और आप? - main Thiik hoon, aur aap? - I am fine, and you?
- आपका नाम क्या है? - aapka naam kyaa hai? - What is your name?
- मेरा नाम सुनील है - meraa naam Suniil hai. - My name is Sunil.

The word order in Hindi sentences is different than in English. In Hindi the verb usually comes last in the sentence. For example in the sentence given above for "What is your name?", the order the words are actually said in Hindi is "your name what is". Aapka means "your", naam means "name", kyaa means "what", and hai means "is". With practice, this difference isn't very hard to get used to.

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

मछली जल की रानी है

In Devanagri

मछली जल की रानी है,
जीवन उसका पानी है,
हाथ लगाओ तो ये डर जाएगी,
बाहर निकालो तो ये मर जाएगी।

In Latin

Machhli jal ki raani hai,
jeevan uskaa paani hai,
haath lagaaO to ye dar jaayegi,
baahar nikaalo to ye mar jaayegi.

Translation

Fish is the queen of water,
Her life is water,
touch her (with your hand) and she will get scared,
take her out and she will die.



Italian

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Italian uses the Latin writing system.

How many people speak this language?

Seventy million people speak Italian as a native language.

Where is this language spoken?

It is spoken in Italy and a little bit in the nations neighbouring to Italy (France, Austria, Croatia, Slovenia), and it's also widespread: - in the Ticino swiss canton (swiss federal official language with German, French and Romansh)]; - in the Vatican City (although the official is Latin, used for celebrations, documents and in bancomat too); - in San Marino (a microstate embedded in the middle of Italy)

It's one of the many official languages of the European Union, and also preserved by many Italian immigrant communities in USA, Canada, Argentina, Brazil, Australia, Belgium, France and Germany.

The high number of emigrants coming to Italy from Third World countries since the '90s are showing usage of Italian as a *lingua franca*.

What is the history of this language?

It is one of the many regional vernaculars of Latin. All these languages split from Latin long ago.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Carlo Collodi (original name Carlo Lorenzini, "Collodi" is just the name of his mother's birthplace) who wrote Pinocchio.

Dante Alighieri wrote "The Divine Comedy" (although in archaic Italian), which is composed of three parts: Inferno, Purgatorio, and Paradiso. The Inferno is about a poet's journey through Hell. It can be a bit of a scary book, so get your parents or teachers to read it first.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

- ciao - hello
- buon giorno - good morning (in the morning), good afternoon (after midday)
- buona sera - good evening
- buona notte - good night
- buon Natale - happy Christmas
- buona Pasqua - happy Easter
- buon compleanno - happy birthday
- buon appetito - have a good meal
- come stai? - how are you?
- bene grazie, e tu? - fine thanks, and you?
- non molto bene - not so good
- sono triste - I'm sad
- sono felice - I'm happy
- non ti preoccupare - don't worry
- stai tranquillo - be quiet
- posso aiutarti? - can I help you?
- mi piace come balli - I like the way you dance
- mi fai diventare matto - you drive me crazy
- sbrigati! - hurry up!
- non penso proprio - I don't think so
- non mi rompere - don't bother me
- che succede? - what's up?
- mi sto bruciando il cervello - my mind is becoming dry
- andiamo a fare una passeggiata - let's go for a walk
- non prendermi in giro - don't fool me
- arrivederci - goodbye
- grazie - thank you
- grazie infinite - thank you very much
- mi dispiace - I'm sorry
- mi dispiace terribilmente - I'm terrible sorry, I'm really sorry
- chiedo perdono - I beg your pardon, I apologize
- piove a dirotto, piove a catinelle - it's raining cats and dogs
- questa è la goccia che fa traboccare il vaso - it's the last straw that broke the camel's back
- bella - beautiful (feminine form)
- madre - mother
- padre - father
- zio(a) - uncle/aunt
- nonno - grandfather
- nonna - grandmother



Japanese

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Japanese uses three different writing systems: *hiragana*, *katakana*, and *kanji*. *Hiragana* and *katakana* are read phonetically; each symbol represents a specific syllable. *Hiragana* is used for Japanese words, while *katakana* is used for foreign words of foreign origin that were integrated into the Japanese language.

Kanji are pictograms, with each character having a specific meaning, like in Chinese. In fact, Many Japanese kanji characters have the same meaning as, and are either identical or similar in appearance, to the Chinese characters. The Japanese government has designated almost 2000 kanji for standard use; high school students in Japan must know all of the standard characters before they graduate.

Romaji is the system used to write Japanese words using the Roman alphabet, like the words on this page (*hiragana*, *katakana*, *kanji*, *romaji*), and is used to help English-speaking Japanese learners learn how to read and pronounce Japanese.

How many people speak this language?

The Japanese language has 127 million native speakers, plus 1 million other speakers.

Where is this language spoken?

Japanese is primarily spoken in Japan, but is also spoken in Hawaii and other parts of the United States (mostly along the Pacific Ocean); Peru; and many Pacific islands.

What is the history of this language?

At first glance, it would be easy to think that Japanese is closely related to Chinese. The kanji characters were all adopted from Chinese, and the kana (*hiragana* and *katakana*) were developed from the kanji. However, Japanese is actually a very different language from Chinese. Before the 5th century, Japanese had no written form, but because of contact with the culture of China, Japan adapted the writing system of Chinese to the Japanese language.

The origins of the Japanese language itself are lost to history. Some people believe that it's related to Korean, but this is uncertain. Perhaps one day more information on the history of this language will be discovered.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Murasaki Shikibu (c.973-c.1014), authored *The Tale of Genji*, one of the earliest novels in the world.

Miyamoto Musashi (c.1584-1645), a samurai who wrote *The Book of Five Rings*.

Matsuo Bashō (c.1644-1694), a master of the poetry form of **haiku**.

Kyokutei Bakin (1767-1848), the author of *Nansō satomi hakkenden* or *The Legend of the Eight Dog Warriors*.

Shusaku Endo (1923-1996) was a writer whose inspiration and motivation came from being a Japanese Catholic.

Koji Suzuki (b. 1957) is a writer of horror novels and short stories. Many of these have been translated into other languages, including his most famous work, **Ring**. Many of his books have been made into films in many languages, including English, Japanese and Korean.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Basic Greetings:

- おはようございます! - Ohayō gozaimasu! - "Good morning!"
- こんにちは! - Konnichiwa! - "Good afternoon!"
- さよなら! - Sayonara! - "Good bye!"
- また 明日! - Mata ashita! - "See you tomorrow!"

Simple Words:

- はい - Hai - "Yes"
- いいえ - Iie - "No"
- 猫 - Neko - "Cat"
- 犬 - Inu - "Dog"
- 日本 - Nihon - "Japan"
- 日本語 - Nihongo - "Japanese language"

Numbers:

1. 一 - Ichi
2. 二 - Ni
3. 三 - San
4. 四 - Shi (yon)
5. 五 - Go
6. 六 - Roku
7. 七 - Nana (shichi)
8. 八 - Hachi
9. 九 - Kyū (ku)

10.十 - Jū

Courtesies:

- すみません - Sumimasen - "Excuse me."
- ありがとうございます - Arigatō gozaimasu - "Thank you."
- ごめんなさい - Gomen nasai - "I'm sorry."
- 大丈夫ですか? - Daijōbu desuka - "Are you okay?"

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

さくら さくら	さくら さくら	Sakura, Sakura	Cherry Blossom
さくら さくら 野山も里も 見わたすかぎり かすみか雲か 朝日ににおう さくら さくら 花ざかり	さくら さくら のやま も さと も みわたす かぎり かすみ か くも か あさひ に におう さくら さくら はな ざかり	Sakura sakura Noyama mo sato mo Miwatasu kagiri Kasumi ka kumo ka Asahi ni niou Sakura sakura Hana zakari	Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms, On mountains and in villages, As far as you can see. They look like a mist, or clouds, Fragrant in the morning sun. Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms, They're in full bloom.
さくら さくら やよいの空は 見わたすかぎり かすみか雲か においぞいずる いざや いざや 見にゆかん	さくら さくら やよい の そら わ みわたす かぎり かすみ か くも か におい ぞ いする いざや いざや みに ゆ かん	Sakura sakura Yayoi no sora wa Miwatasu kagiri Kasumi ka kumo ka Nioi zo izuru Izaya izaya Mini yu kan	Cherry blossoms, cherry blossoms, Across the April skies, As far as you can see. They look like a mist, or clouds, Blooming fragrantly. Let's go! Let's go! Let's go see them!

You can hear the tune at http://www.isc.toyama-u.ac.jp/~hamada/song/sakura/sakura_e.html



Kannada

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The Kannada script is an abugida of the Brahmic family, primarily to write the Kannada language, one of the Dravidian languages in India. It is also used for Konkani, Tulu and Kodava languages.

How many people speak this language?

Approximately sixty million people speak Kannada mainly in the state of Karnataka in South India. People in other Indian states and mainly in western countries form a small percentage of Kannada speaking population.

Where is this language spoken?

Kannada is spoken in the Karnataka state of India. Kannada is also the official language of the state and is considered as one of the eighteen official languages of India.

What is the history of this language?

Kannada is the third oldest language of India after Sanskrit and Tamil. It has a verbal history of over 2,000 years and Kannada words could be identified in Emperor Ashoka's edicts. Kannada became a literary language in the 6th century. The oldest inscriptions of Kannada language can be found in the "Halmidi Shaasana" in the 7th century. The oldest literary epic in Kannada "Kavirajamarga" which follows the Sanskrit tradition of Poetics. Pampa is the best known of the earliest poets whose "Adipurana" and "Vikramaarjunavijayam" form the brightest jewels in the Kannada literary history.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

"**Kavirajamarga**" - a treatise on poetics and language was the first literary work. Though there has been much debate over the author, academics all over common term the author as "**kavirajamargakaara**". Pampa, Ranna and Ponna formed the "Ratnatraya" meaning the "Jewel trinity" of early Kannada literature. The Vachana saahithya then formed the biggest milestone in kannada literature with Bhakti traditionists like Basavanna, Akkamahadevi, Allamaprabhu, Jedara Dasimayya etc. This also laid the cornerstone for the Veerashaiva movement in Karnataka ending in a huge social upheaval and a watershed in the demographics of the region. Some of the Shaivaite poets of recognition have been Harihara and Raghavanka. Kumaravyasa and Lakshmeesha wrote Mahabhaaratha's that complied with the ethos of the Kannada language and culture. The Dasa saahithya propounded by Purandara Dasa, Kanakadasa and other monks of the Dwaita tradition also formed a watershed in kannada literature.

A long slump in any significant contribution to literature was broken by the Navodaya literature in the turn of the century by greats like B.M.Srikantaiah, T.S.Venkanaiah, D.V.Gundappa, Kuvempu, D.R.Bendre, Pu.Ti.Narasimhachar. Great works like "**RamayanaDarshanam**" and "**MankutimmanaKagga**" reclaimed the Kannada ethos and upheld the uniqueness of the Kannada psyche. Following on the heels of Navodaya, the Navya tradition rebelled against the traditionalists and formed a new path. The proponents of this path were Gopalakrishna Adiga, V.K.Gokak, U.R.Ananthamurthy etc. Further, Dalit and Bandaya saahithya enriched the varied range of kannada literature with authors like Devanuru Mahadeva and Siddalingaiah.

Other notable laureates of the century were Shivaram Karanth, Shreeranga, Niranjana, A.Na.Krishnarao, P.Lankesh, Girish Karnad.

Kannada literature's richness has been emphasized by the fact that till recently it had the unique distinction of having received seven Jnanapeetha awards.



Korean

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The one thing that greatly differentiates the Korean language from other far eastern languages such as Chinese and Japanese is the use of the Hangeul (pronounced han-guhl) alphabet. While Chinese uses singular characters to represent each word, and Japanese relies on a mix of two syllabaries (each character of the alphabet representing a syllable rather than a single sound) and simplified Chinese characters, the Hangeul alphabet uses actual letters, each one with its distinct sound, that are arranged together in a unique way to form the Korean words.

The Hangeul alphabet has also the distinction of being the only alphabet in daily use by a large population in the world that is completely purpose-made. The alphabet was invented in 1444 and put to use in 1446 during the reign of King Sejong (1418 - 1450). King Sejong is one of the most highly regarded kings of the old Joseon Dynasty. He was the fourth Joseon king.

The name of the Hangeul alphabet was *hunmin jeongeum* at the time of its creation. *Hunmin jeongeum* means "the correct sounds for the instruction of the people". Other names used to describe the Hangeul alphabet were *eonmeun* (vulgar script) and *gukmeun* (country script).

How many people speak this language?

There are around 71 million Korean speakers around the world; making it the 13th most spoken language in the world.

Where is this language spoken?

Korean is spoken primarily in North and South Korea as well as in the north eastern parts of China and in Japan. However, there are large Korean speaking communities in many major cities around the world.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Language Constitution

There are 14 primitive consonants and 10 vowels in Korean.

- 14 consonants ㄱ ㅋ ㆁ ㄷ ㄱ ㄴ ㄷ ㄹ ㄴ ㅁ ㅂ ㅅ ㅈ ㅊ ㅋ ㆁ ㅍ ㅎ
- 10 vowels ㅏ ㅑ ㅓ ㅕ ㅗ ㅛ ㅜ ㅠ ㅡ ㅣ

Basic Expression

- 안녕하세요?(an nyong ha se yo) - "Hello?"
- 감사합니다(go mab soom ni da) - "Thank you"
- 미안합니다(mi an hab ni da) - "I am sorry"
- 사랑해요(sa rang hae yo) - "I love you"

Word

- 사람 (sa ram) - person
- 남자 (nam ja) - man
- 여자 (yeo ja) - woman
- 사과 (sa gwa) - apple
- 닭 (dak) - chicken
- 말 (mal) - horse
- 감자 (gam ja) - potato



Latin

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Latin uses what is today called the **Latin Alphabet**. This alphabet is thought by many historians to have been a modified version of the ancient Greek alphabet, which in turn is also a variation of ancient Phoenician writing.

The Latin alphabet is the basis for most European languages and for many other languages around the world, which is why it may look familiar to you if you are reading this in English.

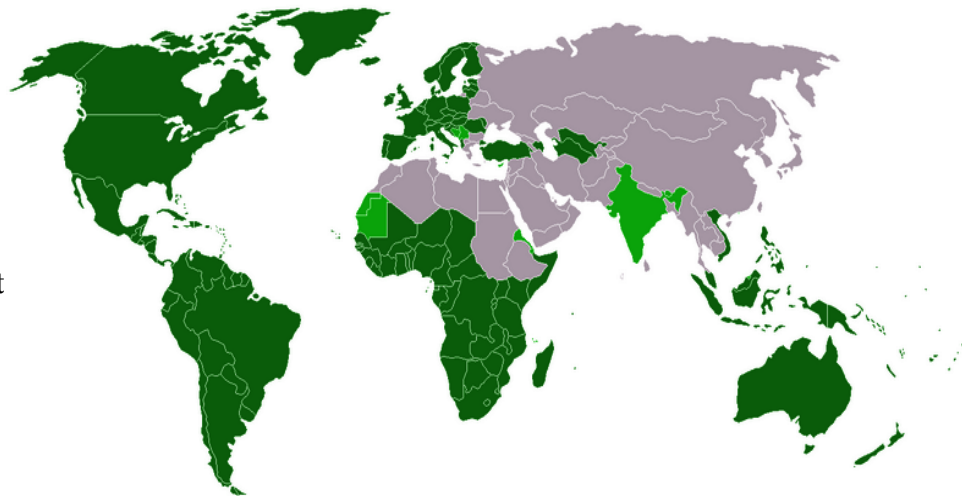
One important difference is that lowercase letters were not usually used in writing classical Latin.

How many people speak this language?

The Latin language is considered extinct, which means no one uses it as everyday language. Still, there are people who know Latin. Some of which are ancient history scholars, who need Latin to read ancient text. Also, linguists (language scholars) who study Romance languages (French, Spanish, Romanian) need to know Latin, because those languages are in fact based on Latin, so one cannot understand their history without knowing Latin.

Where is this language spoken?

The Vatican City has Latin as its official language, even though the language is extinct. Two thousand years ago, Latin was spoken throughout the Roman Empire, which extended at its height from Portugal to Iraq and from Britain to North Africa. During the Middle Ages and the early modern era, Latin was the predominant language of the Church and of Universities in western Europe. Many Latin words and phrases are still used in the fields of law, science and medicine.



Green shows where the Latin Alphabet is used today.

What is the history of this language?

Latin is a member of the family of Italic languages, and its alphabet, the Latin alphabet, is based on the Old Italic alphabet, which is in turn derived from the Greek alphabet. Latin was first brought to the Italian peninsula in the 9th or 8th century B.C. by migrants from the north, who settled in the Latium region, specifically around the River Tiber, where the Roman civilization first developed. Latin was influenced by the Celtic dialects and the non-Indo-European Etruscan language in northern Italy, and by Greek in southern Italy.

Although surviving Latin literature consists almost entirely of Classical Latin, an artificial, highly stylized and polished literary language from the 1st century B.C., the actual spoken language of the Roman Empire was Vulgar Latin, which significantly differed from Classical Latin in grammar, vocabulary, and eventually pronunciation. Although Latin remained the main written language of the Roman Empire, Greek came to be the language spoken by the well-educated elite, as most of the literature studied by Romans was written in Greek. In the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which became the Byzantine Empire, Greek eventually supplanted Latin as both the written and spoken language.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

- **Julius Caesar** - A famous military general who later went on to be the first emperor of Rome. He wrote down accounts of all of his battles in the **Gallic Wars**.
- **Suetonius** - A historian who is probably most famous for his biographies **The Twelve Caesars**, the first twelve rulers of the **Roman Empire**
- **Virgil** - A poet who wrote the **Aeneid**, a book on the founding of the city of Rome (based partly on legend).
- Cicero - Probably the best Roman orator, well-known for his work in politics and law.
- **Livy** - An author of *Ab Urbe Condita*, a history of Rome as a city. His writings are very convoluted - most of his sentences and phrases have some sort of subordination to them.
- **Catullus** - A poet who writes about and to his friends, about his girlfriend, to insult others, or to give condolences.



Julius Caesar

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

- Salve - Hello or Goodbye
- Veni, Vidi, Vici - I came, I saw, I conquered
- Magnum Opus - Master Work
- Per Ardua, ad Astra - Through hard work, to the stars
- Exempla Gratia (In English today we say e.g) - For the sake of an example, an example
- Nota Bene - Note well
- Te amo - I love you
- Et - and
- Tu - You

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

In Latin:

Si qui forte mearum ineptiarum lectores eritis manusque vestras non horrebitis admovere nobis.

Translation:

If you, who are brave, will be readers of my foolishness, then your hands will not tremble as they reach towards my poems.



Marathi

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Marathi uses the devanagri writing system, which is used in other languages such as Hindi and Sanskrit. Traditionally, the Modi script was used, but it was very difficult to use for printing and therefore the devanagri script was adopted and is now the standard writing system for Marathi.

How many people speak this language?

Approximately ninety million people speak Marathi all over the world.

Where is this language spoken?

Marathi is spoken in the Maharashtra state of India. Marathi is also the official language of the state and is considered as one of the eighteen official languages of India. Now, Marathi is also spoken in Maharashtrian communities all over the world.

What is the history of this language?

Marathi was formed as a combination of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic, with more influence from Sanskrit. The exact origin of the language is unknown, though records date back to the eighth century, in this language. It is clear that Marathi became extensively used in the thirteenth century onwards.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Many books have been written in Marathi, on various topics. Tukaram, a Maharashtrian Saint, wrote *abhangas*, or small poems that discouraged evil practices. Other famous authors include Hari Apte, Vishnu Khandekar, Balchandra Nemade, P.L. Deshpande, Tarabai Shinde, V.V. Shirwadkar, and Narendra Jadhav.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Marathi word - Latin version of the word - English translation

- नमस्कार - namaskaar - hello, good morning, afternoon, etc, and goodbye.
- तुम्ही कशे आहात? - tumhi kashe aahaat? - How are you?
- मी ठीक आहे, आणि तुम्ही? - mee teek aahe, aani tumhi? - I am fine, and you?
- तुमच नाव काय आहे? - tumcha naav kaay aahe? - What is your name?
- माझ नाव राहुल आहे. - maazha naav Rahul aahe. - My name is Rahul.

The word order in Marathi sentences is different than in English. In Marathi the verb usually comes last in the sentence. For example in the sentence given above for "What is your name?", the order the words are actually said in Marathi is "your name what is". "tumcha" means your, "naav" means name, "kaay" means what, and "aahe" means is.

Colours

Marathi Word - Latin Version - English Translation

- पांढरा - paandhraa - White
- काळा - kaalaa - Black
- पिवळा - pivlaa - Yellow
- हिरवा - hirvaa - Green
- निळा - nilaa - Blue
- लाल - laal - Red
- जांबळा - jaamblaa - Violet/Purple

Numbers

English Number. Marathi Number (Latin Version)

- 1. एक (ek)
- 2. दोन (don)
- 3. तीन (teen)
- 4. चार (chaar)
- 5. पाच (paach)
- 6. सहा (sahaa)
- 7. सात (saat)
- 8. आठ (aath)
- 9. नौ (nou)
- 10. दहा (dahaa)

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

येरे येरे पावसा

In Devanagari

येरे येरे पावसा, तुला देतो पैसा
पैसा झाला खोटा पाऊस आला मोठा
ये ग ये ग सरी माझे मडके भरी
सर आली धाउन
मडके गेले वाहुन

In Latin

Yere yere pavsa, tula deto paisa
paisa zhala khota, paos ala motha
ye ga ye ga saree, majhe madke bhari
sar ali dhaoon
madki gali wahoon

Translation

Rain rain, come here, i'll give you a paisa
the paisa became fake, the rain came with a rage,
Stream Stream, come here, fill my pots for me
the stream came running,
my pots were washed away.



Portuguese

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The Portuguese language uses the Latin (Western) alphabet without the letters k, w and y.

How many people speak this language?

More than two hundred million people speak Portuguese as native language. It is the 6th most-spoken language of the world and the 3rd most-spoken of the western world. It is one of the official languages of European Union and Mercosul.

Where is this language spoken?

Since 1450, the Portuguese language has been assimilated in lands discovered by the coast of Africa, India, China, Japan, and many islands of Oceania. In some of these countries, Portuguese words, music and even Portuguese creoles are still used, like in India: Goa, Damão, Diu e Dadra e Nagar Haveli. There are many Portuguese-speaking communities in the world, and as such, it is an important minority language in Andorra, Luxembourg, Namibia, Switzerland, and South Africa. It is also spoken in many cities of the world, including Paris (France), Toronto, Hamilton, Montreal, Gatineau (Canada), Boston, New Jersey and Miami (United States).



What is the history of this language?

It is one of the many regional vernaculars of Latin (Ibero-Roman group). All of these languages split from Latin long ago. It also contains influences from the Roman Empire invaders: vandals, celts and visigodes. Together with Gallic (northwestern Spain) comes the Gallic-Portuguese language, formed in the Middle Ages. Portuguese also includes influences from Arabic invaders from northern Africa, in the Reconquest, and by the natives of the countries that have been discovered and colonized.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

- Luís de Camões (Portuguese, b. c. 1524 - d. June 10, 1580): considered by some the greatest poet of both the Portuguese language and of mankind.
- Machado de Assis (Brazilian, b. Rio de Janeiro, June 21, 1839 — d. Rio de Janeiro, September 29, 1908): widely regarded as the most important writer of Brazilian literature.
- Fernando Pessoa (Portuguese, b. Lisbon, June 13, 1888 — d. Lisbon, November 30, 1935): another great Portuguese poet.
- José Saramago (Portuguese, b. November 16, 1922) Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998.
- Paulo Coelho (Brazilian, b. August 24, 1947)

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Respostas

Sim
Não
Talvez
Olá
Oi! Como vai?
Bom dia
Boa tarde
Boa noite
Que há de novo?
Não muito.
Adeus.
Até amanhã.
Poderia dizer-me onde posso encontrar um banheiro (or WC)?
Quanto custa?
Quero um copo de leite.
Gosto de você.
Te Amo.

Responses

Yes
No
Maybe
Hello
Hi! How are you?
Good morning
Good afternoon
Good night
What's up?
Not much.
Good-bye.
See you tomorrow.
Could you tell me where the bathroom is?
How much does it cost?
I want a glass of milk.
I like you.
I love you.

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

"Cai,Cai, Balão"

*Cai, Cai, Balão;
Cai, Cai, Balão;
Aqui na minha mão.;
Não cai, não;
Não cai, não;
Não cai, não;
Cai na rua do João.*

in English....

"Fall, Fall, Balloon"
Fall, Fall, Balloon;
Fall, Fall, Balloon;
right here in my hand.
Please don't fall;
Please don't fall;
Please don't fall;
Fall on John's street.



Russian

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The Russian alphabet is based on the Cyrillic writing system. Legend says that two Byzantine brothers, Cyril and Methodius, created it using letters of the Greek and Hebrew alphabets in the 9th century. Cyrillic script has changed much with time, even more than the Latin script we use. Actually, modern Russians are not able to read a three-hundred-year-old book in Russian. This is not only because the language has changed, but also because they are not able to recognize many letters. The last big change of Russian script happened in 1918, and the alphabet has remained the same since.

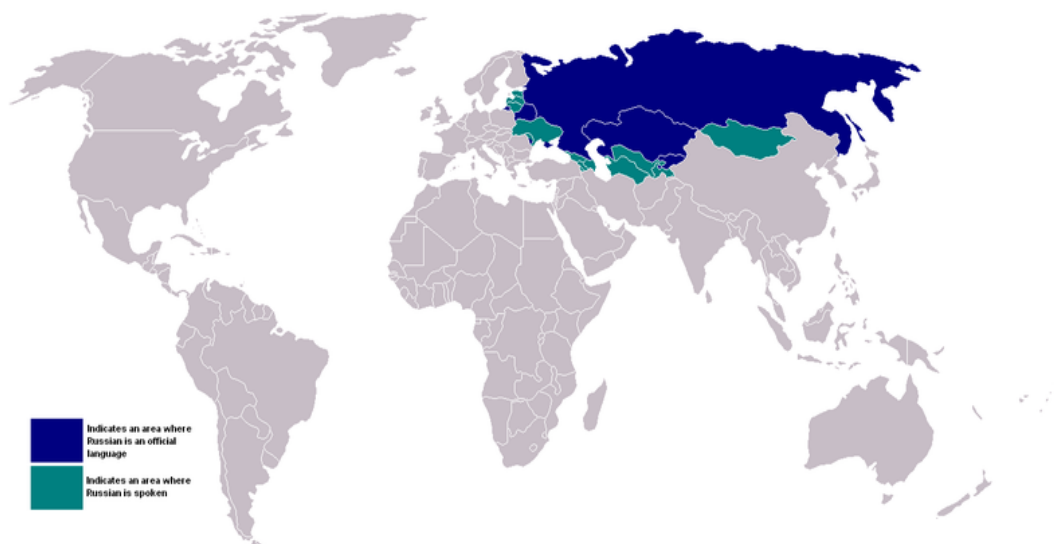
There are a total of thirty-three letters in the modern Russian alphabet, which are:

А а Б б В в Г г Д д Е е Ё ё Ж ж З з И и Й й
К к Л л М м Н н О о П п Р р С с Т т У у Ф ф
Х х Ц ц Ч ч Ш ш Щ щ Ъ ъ Ы ы Ь ь Э э Ю ю Я я

How many people speak this language?

Russian is the native language for about 145 million people. There are also about 110 million who speak it as a secondary language (that means that they have *learned* it).

Where is this language spoken?



Russian is, of course, spoken in Russia. It is widely spoken in Belarus and eastern Ukraine. It is also used in the lands of the former Soviet Union for communication between people who speak different languages (like English in other parts of the world).

Russian is also spoken by the communities of Russian **emigrants** in the U.S.A., Germany and many other countries.

emigrant - someone who have left the land where he was born and moved to another country

What is the history of this language?

The Russian language belongs to the group of languages that are called **Slavic**. These languages have many commonalities, some of which are similar word roots and similar grammar. It is for this reason why scientists think that all Slavic languages originated from one **Proto-Slavic** language, that people spoke a long time ago (before 1000 A.D.) As time passed, the language spread, and people in different countries began to speak it differently. It is considered that Russian became a separate language in 14th – 15th centuries, when Russia was freed from Mongol invasion.

As Russia changed with time, so did the language. Major events in Russian history brought new features to language and literature. **Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin** is considered the "father" of modern literary language. Though Russian language is very flexible and ever-changing, Pushkin's language stays the base and the standard of classic style.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Russian literature is well known in the West. Possibly you've heard the names of Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, Nabokov, Brodsky. But not many people know that there are lots of wonderful children's books in Russia.

Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin (1799 - 1837) is one of the greatest Russian poets. He wrote books both for grown ups and for children. When he was a child, his nanny, Arina Rodionovna, told him many beautiful folk fairy tales. When he grew up, he wrote down these fairy tales in poem form. The plot of *The Tale of the Dead Princess and the Seven Knights* reminds one of the Snow White story. In *The Tale of Tsar Saltan*, when the tsar chooses one of three sisters to be his queen, the others get jealous and tell lies about her. The queen and her son are sent to a faraway island, where a fairy princess helps the young prince to reunite with his father. These books became classics of Russian Children's literature, and every child in Russia knows them by heart, just like you know Mother Goose rhymes.



Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin

Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy (1828 - 1910), the author of *War and Peace*, is probably the most well-known Russian writer in the West. He wrote books for children too. He was very compassionate towards peasant people, and tried to help them as much as he could. He opened a school for peasant children and wrote the textbooks for it himself. He also wrote three very beautiful books about his own young years: *Childhood*, *Boyhood* and *Youth*.

A lot of interesting children's books were written in Russian in the 20th century. **Korney Ivanovich Chukovsky** wrote fairy tales about Bad Robber Barmaley and Kind Doctor Aibolit, Moidodyr who makes all kids wash up in the morning, and evil Tarakanishe (the Huge Roach) that terrorizes all the animals in the forest. **Samuil Yakovlevich Marshak** wrote *Tale of a Silly Mouseling* and *Cat's house*. **Nikolai Nosov** wrote a series of books about the adventures of Neznaika (Dontknow) and his friends, living in the happy Flower city.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

(try to speak *ye* out as *one* sound.)

- Привет (Privyet) - Hello (informal)
- Здравствуйте (Zdrasvuytye) - Hello (formal)
- Как дела? (Kak dyela?) - How are you?
- Меня зовут... (Minya zavut) - My name is...
- Давай дружить! (Davay druzhit!) - Let's become friends!
- До свидания! (Do Svidaniya) - Goodbye!

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Try to learn this little poem by Agnia Barto:

Уронили мишку на пол,
Оторвали мишке лапу.
Всё равно его не брошу —
Потому что он хороший.

It sounds like that:

Ooronili mishkoo na pol,
Otorvali mishke lapoo,
Vsyo ravno evo nye broshoo —
Pahtomoo shto on horoshiy.

And that means:

Teddy bear was dropped on the floor,
Teddy bear's paw got torn off.
But I will never leave him —
Because he is good.



Sanskrit

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Sanskrit is written in the Devanagari script, one of the oldest writing systems in the world. Some languages, such as Hindi and Marathi are also written in Devanagari, but Sanskrit is the first language to use this writing system. Originally Sanskrit was not a written language, and when it started being written, a number of different scripts were used initially, until Devanagari became the standard.

How many people speak this language?

A little more than two hundred thousand people in the World can speak Sanskrit very well. Sanskrit is an old language and is mostly used by priests and scholars of old texts including many religious ones. Many people know a little Sanskrit because of the importance it has to other Indian languages and the Hindu religion.

Where is this language spoken?

Sanskrit was used widely in ancient times, but nowadays, there are very few areas in the World where this language is spoken. It was invented in India and some communities in India still speak in Sanskrit. Many Asian Buddhists can also speak Sanskrit. It is found in Hindu holy writings and hymns. It is known to be used regularly in some areas in South India, though.

What is the history of this language?

Sanskrit is an ancient language and is comparable to the Latin language spoken in Europe. Sanskrit is a very complex and rich language, which has served to be the source for many modern Indian languages, just like Latin is the source for European languages like French and Spanish.

Sanskrit was considered a high-level language and was spoken by officials, kings, noble men etc. It was difficult for the common man to comprehend Sanskrit. Sanskrit eventually became almost extinct, but it was kept alive by holy men, scholars and Buddhists.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Many ancient writers such as Sage Vyaas, Chanakya etc. used Sanskrit for their writings. It is a rich language and the writers gained fame for enriching it further. The great Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata are also written in Sanskrit, as are the Vedas, Upanishads and Subhashitratnani.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Numbers

- एक - eka - One
- द्वी - dvi - Two
- त्री - tri - Three
- चतुर - chatura - Four
- पांच - paancha - Five
- षष - shasha - six
- सप्त - sapta - seven
- अष्ट - ashta - eight
- नव - nava - Nine
- दस - dasa - ten
- एकदस - ekadasa - Eleven

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Sanskrit

कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदचन।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोस्त्वकर्मणि॥

-श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता (२:४७)

Latin pronunciation

karmany evadhikaras te ma phaleshu kadachana
ma karma-phala-hetur bhur ma te sango 'stv akarmani

-Shri Bhagvatgita (Chapter 2 verse 47)

English Word Meanings

karmani--prescribed duties; eva--certainly; adhikarah--right; te--of you; ma--never; phaleshu--in the fruits; kadachana--at any time; ma--never; karma-phala--in the result of the work; hetuh--cause; bhuh--become; ma--never; te--of you; sangah--attachment; astu--be there; akarmani--in not doing.

English Translation

Your right is to work only,
But never to its fruits;
Let not the fruits of action be thy motive,
Nor let thy attachment be to inaction.



Spanish

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Spanish is written using the Latin alphabet, with the addition of ñ (enye). Ch (che, pronounced [tʃ]) and ll (eye) also used to have their own places in the alphabet (a, b, c, ch, d, ..., l, ll, m, n, ñ, ...) as well as rr (erre, the double r indicating a rolled r). Since 1994, however, words containing the letters ch and ll have been alphabetized as though spelled with the separate letters c - h and l - l.

How many people speak this language?

There are over 400 million people across the globe who speak Spanish as their first language. When you include non-native speakers (people who learned another language before they learned Spanish), the total increases to about 500 million.

Where is this language spoken?

This language is spoken in Central and South America (except Brazil, Guyana, French Guyana and Suriname), Mexico and Spain. Large numbers of Spanish-speaking peoples live in the United States as well.

What is the history of this language?

Spanish is a member of the Romance branch of Indo-European languages, descended largely from Latin.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra was a Spanish novelist, poet and playwright. He is best known for his novel Don Quixote de la Mancha, which is considered by many to be the first modern novel, one of the greatest works in Western literature, and the greatest of the Spanish language.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Respuestas

Sí
No
Tal vez, quizás

Saludos

Hola
Buenos días
Buenas tardes
Buenas noches
¿Qué hay de nuevo?
No mucho.

Despedidas

Adiós.
Chao (Chau).
Nos vemos mañana.
Hablamos (translated 'Nos mantendremos en contacto').
Te veo pronto.

Frases útiles

¿Podría decirme dónde puedo encontrar un baño?
(polite)
¿Dónde hay un baño?
¿Cuánto cuesta?
Quiero una leche.
Me gustas tú.
Te quiero.
Mi perro se comió mi tarea.

Responses

Yes
No
Maybe

Greetings

Hello
Good morning
Good afternoon
Good night
What's up?
Not much.

Good-byes

Good-bye.
Bye.
See you tomorrow.
Keep in touch.
See you soon.

Useful phrases

Could you tell me where the bathroom is?
Where is the bathroom?
How much does it cost?
I want a milk.
I like you.
lit. "I want you" I love you
My dog ate my homework.

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

Hola, amigos como están?

Hola, amiguitos como están?

(Spanish)

Hola, amigos como están?
Hola, amigos como están?
Hoy vamos a jugar
luego vamos a cantar
y entonces nosotros podemos salir a casa.

Hello, How Are You My Friends?

(English)

Hello, how are you my friends?
Hello, how are you my friends?
Today we are going to play
then we are going to sing
and then we can go home..

Estrellita

Estrellita

(Spanish)

Estrellita, donde estás?
Me pregunto que serás.
En el cielo y en el mar,
Un diamante de verdad.
Estrellita, donde estás?
Me pregunto que serás....

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

(English)

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.
Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star

(Literal English)

Where are you, little star,
How I wonder what you are.
In the sky and in the sea,
Truly like a diamond.
Where are you, little star,
How I wonder what you are!

La Pequeñita Araña

La Pequeñita Araña

(Spanish)

La pequeñita araña subió,
subió, subió.
Bajó la lluvia, y se la llevó.
Salió el sol, y todo secó,
Y la pequeñita araña subió,
subió, subió.

The Itsy Bitsy Spider

(English)

The itsy bitsy spider climbed up
the water spout.
Down came the rain and washed
the spider out.
Out came the sun and dried up
all the rain,
And the itsy bitsy spider went
up the spout again.

The Cute Little Spider

(Literal English)

The cute little spider climbed up,
climbed up, climbed up.
Down came the ran and she was carried
away.
Out came the sun and it dried
everything,
And the cute little spider climbed up,
climbed up, climbed up.

Un elefante

Un elefante

(Spanish)

Un elefante
Se columpiaba
Sobre la tela d'un araña.
Como veía
que resistía,
Fue a llamar otro elefante.

Dos elefantes
Se columpiaban
Sobre la tela d'un araña.
Como veían
que resistía,
Fueron a llamar otro
elefante.

Tres elefantes...
(Y así...)

One Elephant

(English)

One elephant,
Was swinging,
On a spider web.
Since he saw,
That it held him,
He went to call another elephant.

Two elephants,
Were swinging,
On a spider web.
Since they saw,
That it held them,
They went to call another
elephant.

Three elephants...
(And so on...)



Swedish

What writing system(s) does this language use?

The Swedish alphabet is a twenty-nine letter alphabet, the standard Latin alphabet plus three additional letters which are Å / å, Ä / ä, and Ö / ö. These letters are sorted in that order after z.

How many people speak this language?

Swedish is spoken by 9,300,000 people

Where is this language spoken?

Swedish is spoken primarily in:

- Sweden
- Finland

As a minority language in:

- Estonia

What is the history of this language?

In the 9th century, Old Norse began to diverge into Old West Norse (Norway and Iceland) and Old East Norse (Sweden and Denmark). In the 12th century, the dialects of Denmark and Sweden began to diverge, becoming Old Danish and Old Swedish in the 13th century. All were heavily influenced by Middle Low German during the medieval period. Though stages of language development are never as sharply delimited as implied here, and should not be taken too literally, the system of subdivisions used in this article is the most commonly used by Swedish linguists and is used for the sake of practicality.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Probably the best known Swedish childrens' book is *Pippi Longstocking* (*Pippi Långstrump* in Swedish) by Astrid Lindgren. This book was translated in 70 languages! Astrid Lindgren also wrote *Karlsson-on-the-Roof*, *Mio, my Mio* and many other interesting stories for children.



Karlsson-on-the-Roof

Tove Jansson was from Finland, but she wrote books in Swedish. She created a series of childrens' books about Moomins, funny creatures that a bit look like hippos. The family of Moomis live in their house in Moominvalley, though in the past their residences have included a lighthouse and a theatre.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Swedish English

Hej	Hi
Goddag	Good day
Godnatt	Good night
Hej då	Bye
Mat	Food
Äta	Eat
Sova	Sleep
Bok	Book
Läsa	Read
Studera	Study
Gå	Walk
Springa	Run
Hoppa	Jump

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

In Swedish:

Du gamla, Du fria, Du fjällhöga nord
Du tysta, Du glädjerika sköna!
Jag hälsar Dig, vänaste land uppå jord,
Din sol, Din himmel, Dina ängder gröna.

Du tronar på minnen från fornstora dar,
då ärat Ditt namn flög över jorden.
Jag vet att Du är och förblir vad du var.
Ja, jag vill leva jag vill dö i Norden.

In English:

Thou ancient, thou free, thou mountainous North.
In beauty and peace our hearts beguiling.
I greet thee, thou loveliest land on the earth.
Thy sun, thy skies, thy meadows green.

Thy rest on the memories of the great days of yore.
When all round the world thine name honoured was.
I know that you are and you will be as you were.
Oh, I would live and I would die in the North.



Urdu

What writing system(s) does this language use?

Urdu does not use Latin characters. It is written in the Perso-Arabic Script, and has many alphabets common with Arabic and Persian. It is written from right to left.

How many people speak this language?

There are an estimated 150 to 200 million speakers of Urdu around the world. It is also closely related to the language Hindi, and speakers of the everyday form of the languages can usually understand each other.

Where is this language spoken?

Urdu is widely spoken in Pakistan and India, though it also has large number of speakers in the Middle East, United Kingdom, and North America.

What is the history of this language?

Urdu evolved in the Indian subcontinent from various local dialects such as Prakrit and Brij Bhasha with outside influences from Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages.

Who are some famous authors or poets in this language?

Urdu is rich in both prose and poetry. Most famous poets of Urdu are Allama Muhammad Iqbal, Mirza Ghalib, Mir Taqi Mir, and Faiz Ahmed Faiz.

What are some basic words in this language that I can learn?

Urdu word	Latin version	English translation
آداب	Aadab	Greetings!
شکریہ	Shukriya	Thank you.
برائے مہربانی	baraey meherbani	Please
معاف کیجئے	maaf keejiye	Sorry
شب بخیر	shab Bakhair	Good Night
آپ کیسے ہیں؟	aap kaise haiN?	How are you?
میں بخیر ہوں	main bakhair hooN	I am fine.
آپ کا نام کیا ہے؟	aapka naam kyaa hai?	What is your name?
میرا نام سائمہ ہے	meraa naam Saima hai	My name is Saima.

What is a simple song/poem/story that I can learn in this language?

In Urdu

. میں اکیلا ہی چلا تھا جانب منزل مگر
لوگ ساتھ آتے گئے اور کارواں بنتا گیا

Latin Version

maiN akela hi chala tha jaanib-e-manzil magar
log saath aate gaye aur kaaravaaN bantaa gayaa

Translation

I had started all alone, towards the destination
People kept joining, and it became a caravan.



Glossary

alphabet - all the letters of a language

character - a letter, number, or punctuation mark

colonization - going to and conquering other countries; a way of spreading a language; because England colonized America, the people of America now speak English

consonant - all letters except vowels

constructed language - a language made up scientifically

dialect - one form of a language; sometimes different regions of a country develop slightly different forms of a language, called dialects

emigrant - someone who have left the land where he was born and moved to another country.

eszett - A letter which only found in the German alphabet, it looks like this: **ß**

fluency - being able to speak a language without any trouble

infinitive - a **tenseless** form of a verb; it is not used for a specific period of time

language development - the steady growth and change of a language; languages took over a thousand years to get to what we speak today

linguist - someone who studies languages

literature - books, like the one you are reading now

mood - a certain way of saying something; these can be orders, possible actions, or regular **speech**

native speaker - someone who learned to speak a language as a child

prose - writing in sentence form; the opposite of verse

speech - a fancy way of saying "speaking"

tense - a form of a verb that describes a time for an action; for example, "I went," "I am going", and "I will go" are in past, present, and future tense. They are different tenses because they describe different times when I did the action of going.

umlauts - Three German alphabet vowels that have two dots above them, they look like this: **Ää, Öö, Üü**

verb - a word that describes an action

vernacular - the native language of a country

verse - writing in poetic form; writing not in sentences

vowel - A, E, I, O, U in English



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- **Benjamin Aaron Horowitz** - Working currently on the arabic pages, and small edits on other pages as well.
- **limetom** - Working on the Latin section, added poetry.
- **Markus Koljonen** – parts of the Finnish page mostly
- **Girish** - Will be contributing to Hindi, Marathi, Sanskrit.

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