



Lingualicious

Factual snippets of major languages in the world

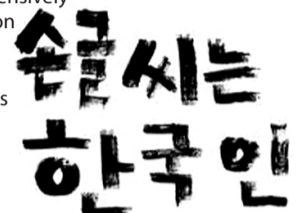
JAPANESE The Japanese language reflects centuries of Sino-Japanese cultural exchanges, showing deep Chinese influences through its kanji. Once spoken only in Japan, it is today one of the most popular Asian languages, with over 120 million speakers and learners worldwide. Learners will experience firsthand the Japanese penchant for etiquette when juggling its polite-form grammars through the language. Meanwhile, countless slangs resulted from Japan's vibrant popular culture will prove just as challenging.



Japanese



KOREAN Until the Korean alphabets (hangeul) were invented in the 15th century, the Korean language had been borrowing extensively from the Chinese language. Today, it is used by close to 80 million people, and still adopts Chinese characters (hanja), which high school students are expected to learn for up to 2,000 words. In recent decades, both North and South Korea have seen efforts to reduce the use of hanja in favor of a purer Korean language.



Korean

Vietnamese

VIETNAMESE The Vietnamese language is spoken by more than 80 million people. Vietnamese is a cultural hybrid with Chinese and colonial French influence, and its modern Latin alphabet writing system was introduced in the 17th century by European missionaries. The language retains its distinctive tone, however, as underlined by the absence of letters "F", "J", "W" and "Z" from the alphabets.



TAMIL Tamil is one of the oldest surviving classical languages, dating back to the 6th century BC. The official language of India, Sri Lanka and Singapore, it is also used in Tamil communities worldwide, combining a total of over 60 million users. The language comes in various forms and dialects, but they all share the notable feature of Tamil alphabets' curved strokes, made so to avoid ripping the palm leaves that ancient Tamils wrote on.

Indonesian



Thai

THAI The Thai language is closely related to Lao, which is intelligible to the Thai people. Centuries of Buddhist influence has brought ubiquitous Sanskrit and Pali elements, while the people's emphasis on kinship and social status is apparent in its grammars, including specific vocabularies for the royalty. But most will recognize the language from its flowing text, as spacing is not used between Thai words unless to indicate the end of a clause or a sentence.



Arabic



ARABIC The modern standard Arabic is the official language of 26 countries across Middle East and North Africa. It is derived from a classical form, which is today mostly used for the Quran and literature. During the apex of the Muslim civilization, the Arabic language became an important medium for cultural and technological exchanges. The "Arabic" numerals, however, were not of Arabic origin, but rather Indian inventions brought to Europe by the Arabs.



TURKISH Many might consider the Turkish language

a variant of Arabic, but it is actually of central Asian origin; even its Ottoman-Arabic script was replaced by Latin alphabets after a reform in 1928. The reform was part of Turkey's self-modernizing effort, and to this day, the country still retains the Turkish Language Association, an official organization created for linguistic governing.

FRENCH Few European languages are quite as captivating as French, which to many symbolizes the Old World elegance and sophistication – a connection justified by the fact that French literature has won more Nobel Prizes than any other languages. Derived from Latin, French is today one of the most studied languages, with up to 110 million native speakers worldwide. The bulk of them are actually in Africa due to colonial legacies.

BONJOUR
LA
FRANCE!



German



GERMAN The German language is a relative to English and Dutch. To the non-speaker, German is infamous for its taxing grammar and bombastically long words due to stacked modifiers. Nonetheless, it remains European Union's most used first language. An unproven legend also suggests that German almost became the official language of the United States during a pre-independence voting, where English won only by a very slim margin.



ITALIAN The standard Italian language is a descendant to Latin, though they are not as close as the geography suggests. More specifically it was a form of Tuscan dialect, popularized by thinkers and writers through the medieval times. Due to Italy's central role in the Renaissance, many English words related to art, science and architecture are of Italian origin, but learners should beware of the many "false friends" – camera in Italian, for instance, means room.

Italian

Spanish

SPANISH Another Romance language (i.e. of Latin origin), Spanish is used by over 400 million people in Europe as well as Central and South America. It is considered relatively easy to learn for English speakers, who can readily recognize over 3,000 Spanish words. Spanish is fast becoming a global language with growing tourism in and cultural influence from Latin America. In Asia, it is also currently experiencing a revival in the Philippine schools.



PORTUGUESE The Portuguese language is a close relative to Spanish, sharing a certain degree of mutual intelligibility. At the height of Portugal's maritime empire, the language was spread across the southern hemisphere, and over 200 million people use it nowadays. Its writing system used to vary across regions, but Portugal and Brazil have joined hands to standardize Portuguese spelling through an Orthographic Agreement in 1990.



Portuguese

Swedish

SWEDISH



Swedish belongs to the group of North Germanic languages and is hence mutually intelligible with Norwegian and Danish. A descendant from the Vikings' Old Norse, the language did not have a fully standardized writing system until the 20th century. Swedish is now spoken by around 10 million people across Scandinavia, though miraculously it did not legally become Sweden's official language until 2009.

CZECH The modern grammatical principles of Czech were the product of linguistic reforms during the 18-19th century National Renaissance. With over 10 million native speakers, it is one of European Union's 23 official languages. True to its Slavic origin, Czech features many words without vowels, as shown by notable tongue-twisters such as "Strč prst skrz krk", which aptly means "stick your finger through your throat".



Czech

Greek



GREEK The Greek language still stands testament the culture's definitive influence to western civilizations, as around 30% of English vocabulary has a classical Greek origin. Its striking alphabets – the alphas and betas that continue to be used as symbols in scientific studies – have stayed essentially unchanged for over 2 millennia; however many words and pronunciations have evolved in modern Greek, which is used mainly in Greece and Cyprus.