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# Lingo

The language magazine for younger readers

Issue 1

## Our Word of the Issue

Discover the meaning behind the word 'Lingo'

## Language Games

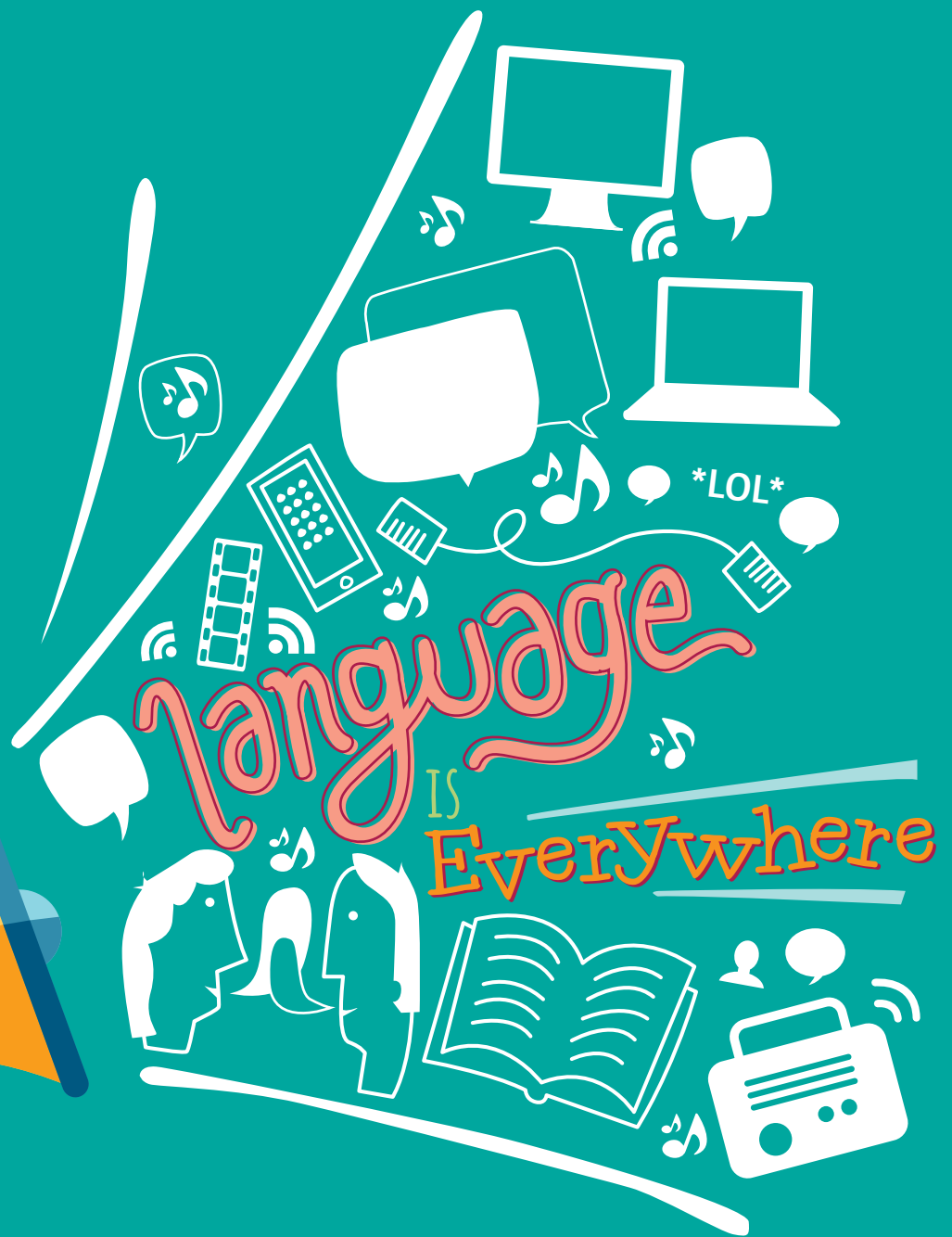
Can you solve our linguistic puzzles?



How do human beings speak?



Meet our first Lingo penpal



Hello  
ENGLISH

Holá  
SPANISH

Hallo  
GERMAN

Ciao  
ITALIAN

Witaj  
POLISH

ПРИВЕТ (privet)  
RUSSIAN

Bonjour  
FRENCH

Hei  
NORWEGIAN

Hej  
DANISH

Hallå  
SWEDISH

Szia  
HUNGARIAN

# Lingo

## Welcome!

Wilkommen, witamy was and bienvenue, to the very first Lingo!

Lingo is the magazine to read for fascinating ideas about language, intriguing articles from experts and puzzles to test your language knowledge!

Here at Lingo, we're intrigued by the variety of ways in which human beings communicate. And not just the languages spoken in the British Isles, but languages all over the world. So, for the first ever Lingo we look at languages from across Europe.

Our first issue has a European theme. We introduce some phrases from different European languages, investigate how different languages affect each other and test your language logic with our European-themed language puzzles. Our colourful pull-out poster also shows the variety of different languages spoken across the continent.

We also look at language beyond Europe. Our first ever Lingo penpal writes to us from Indonesia to tell us about the

different languages she speaks.

We also try to answer some questions that many of us ask about language. Why do we speak different languages, and why can people who speak the same language sound different? And is it possible to have a language without speech?

All in all, plenty for language lovers to enjoy! There's information on our website about how to buy future issues of Lingo. You can find us at [www.lingozine.com](http://www.lingozine.com) and you can email us via [editors@lingozine.com](mailto:editors@lingozine.com) or follow us on Facebook and Twitter (@lingozine). Let us know what you think of Lingo! You can even write us a letter if you prefer. The address is [here](#).

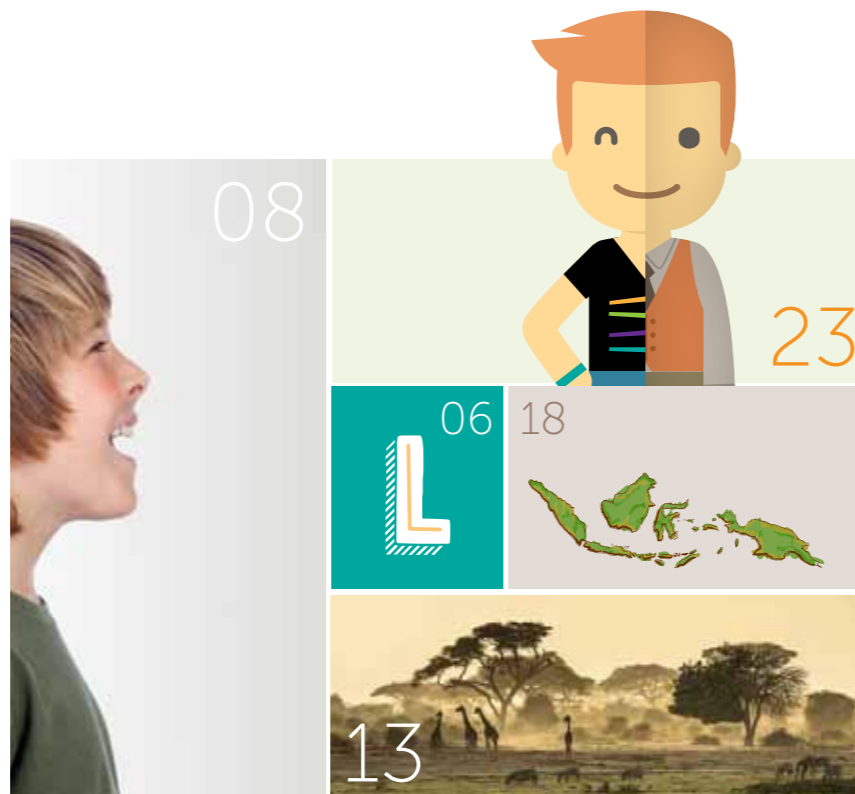
thanks.

The Lingo Team

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# LANGUAGE

## puzzles

### Plastic plurals

A material is said to be 'plastic' if it can easily change its form. In language, some parts of words can also change their form to suit their surroundings. Take the plural marker – usually in English when we want to write about more than one of something, we use the ending -s:

(one) cat → (many) cats                      (one) mother → (many) mothers  
(one) pencil → (many) pencils              (one) plate → (many) plates

However, when the root word ends with a consonant making a s, z, sh, or ch sound, the ending changes form to -es:

(one) wish → (many) wishes                  (one) fox → (many) foxes  
(one) match → (many) matches              (one) buzz → (many) buzzes

English isn't the only language whose plural marker has a number of forms. Turkish also has two plural endings: -lar and -ler and a rule for which form to use with which words.

Can you figure out what the general rule is by looking at the examples below?

ENGLISH	TURKISH	ENGLISH	TURKISH
car	araba	cars	arabalar
house	ev	houses	evler
eyebrow	kaş	eyebrows	kaşlar
chin	çene	chins	çeneler
branch	dal	branches	dallar
hand	el	hands	eller
animal	hayvan	animals	hayvanlar
curtain	perde	curtains	perdeler

When you think you've worked out the rule, see if you can write the plural forms of the following Turkish words:

1. bacak ('leg') → A: .....
2. tepe ('hill') → A: .....
3. dans ('dance') → A: .....
4. et ('meat') → A: .....



Turkish is spoken by around 70 million people in Europe and Asia



Answers on page 26



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# Word OF THE month:

# LINGGO

Why did we decide to call this magazine 'Lingo' and what does it mean?

**W**ell, you may think it's a modern word, but that's not true. It was first borrowed by English in the mid 17th century (i.e. from about the 1650s) probably from Portuguese *lingoa* which in turn comes from Latin *lingua*. These words literally mean 'tongue'.

The modern meaning of lingo includes foreign languages or unfamiliar local dialects (do you speak the lingo?) and the special vocabulary associated with a particular topic or social group (computer lingo).

If you look up the word in a large 'corpus'\* of texts like the British National Corpus (100 million words of British English), you find that it is used to describe all sorts of varieties of language, usually from the point of view of an outsider who doesn't understand the language concerned.

In example 1, the narrator refers to Italian as a lingo which implies that it is a difficult thing to do and that the learning of language is mysterious. If you think about how different it would seem if you replaced lingo with language, you will see how lingo is often used where speakers are slightly afraid of unfamiliar languages. When the word lingo is used, it implies that speakers of the lingo are part of the 'in-crowd' – they belong to an exclusive group – and the user of the word is usually outside the group.

There is another side to the meaning of the word lingo too. It has a playful, jokey feel to it. It appears to recognise that language is always changing and can be fun. It doesn't take language too seriously and it recognises that learning particular languages or varieties of language can help people to join in with new groups. This is the meaning we want to use. We want to celebrate diversity and creativity in language and we want our readers to learn about human language and how it is important in society.

### Here are some examples:

- 1 After some weeks, he had absorbed enough Italian to learn his lines in the *lingo*.
- 2 This book's all you need to keep your '90s *lingo* up to date.
- 3 How come you speak this foreign *lingo* so fluently?
- 4 He picked up the *lingo* right away, but I find it hard.



A 'corpus' (literally meaning 'body') of texts is an electronic database usually consisting of many millions of words of a language. You can search it in various ways to see how words and phrases are regularly used.

The British National Corpus is a 100 million-word corpus of written and spoken British English collected in the early 1990s.

You can find information on the BNC at: [www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk](http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk)



# How Do Human Beings SPEAK?

## PART ONE Airstreams & the Larynx

**IF** you want to impress your friends and family, tell them that human beings speak by using an 'egressive pulmonary airstream mechanism'. All it means is that human beings mostly speak on an outgoing (egressive) breath (airstream) which comes from the lungs (pulmonary) and is the means (mechanism) by which we manage to make sounds.

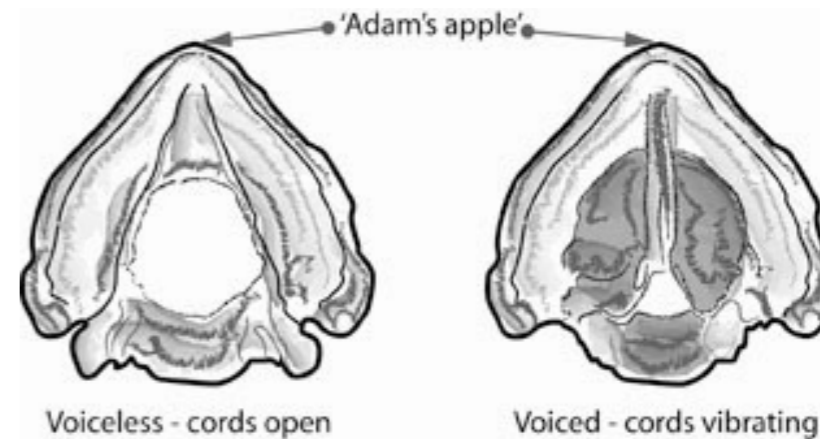
So, that's the first thing to note; we speak on the outward breath. Just a few languages (e.g. Nordic languages) use ingressive (in-breath) sounds for particular effects, but the average human speaker uses outgoing breath most of the time, whatever language s/he speaks.

We don't often use ingressive airstreams when we speak, partly because it's more difficult to control the air and also because the sounds we make are less clear. If you have ever tried to understand your friends explaining why they are crying their eyes out,

you will know that it is hard to understand them. This is because the sobbing takes up the outward breath, leaving only the inward ones to speak on!

So, outward breathing is very important for speech. It's also very important that our speech is usually made up of a continuous stream of sound. We cut it up into letters for the written language for convenience, though there is no silence between the sounds they represent. However, we also hear speech as a string of individual sounds too, not just because we can read and write, but because certain parts of the speech sound have an effect on meaning. If you change the word *mill* into *till*, there is a very small difference in sound, but quite a clear difference in meaning. So, the sounds /m/ and /t/ must be significant in English.

In order to understand how human beings produce speech sounds, we need to be familiar with the speech organs and their functions. We will start at the larynx, which is the place where your vocal folds (or cords) are located. Here is a diagram of your larynx, as if



there was a camera taking a photo from the point of your throat where your Adam's (or Eve's) apple is! Try finding your larynx from the outside by putting your fingers lightly on the front of your throat – it goes up and down when you swallow or speak.

Above, you can see the larynx with the vocal folds in a relaxed position, as if you were quietly breathing without speaking or coughing etc. On the right you can see how it looks when the vocal cords are pulled close together so that as the air leaves the lungs it has to pass through the narrow opening and makes the cords vibrate, producing what we call 'voicing'.

Note that if you clamp the folds hard together, this will stop the airflow entirely and result in the kind of noises that we tend to make when making a hard physical effort, such as in lifting something heavy. This complete closure is also known as a 'glottal stop' because another name for the internal contents of the larynx is the glottis. Sometimes we use the sound made by a glottal stop instead of a /t/ sound – as in the word 'butter'. It sounds a little bit as though the /t/ is missing, but if you listen carefully, there is the sound of the vocal folds clamping shut and cutting off the air flow.

So, the air leaves the lungs and travels through the glottis – either

with the vocal folds open or with them brought close together. If the vocal folds are open, the air may still produce a speech sound, but it will be called a 'voiceless' sound and as a result of not being voiced, it is quieter than voiced sounds.

### GIVE IT A GO!

In order to really feel the difference between voiced and voiceless sounds, put your fingers on the side of your larynx (half way down your throat – on the outside!) and try saying a long /ssssssssss/ sound. You should feel nothing significant through your fingertips. Then change the sound to a /zzzzzzzzzzzz/ and you should begin to feel the buzzing of the vocal folds. If you then alternate short bursts of /sss/ and /zzz/, you will feel the voicing turning on and off.

Try making the following pairs of sounds and decide which are voiced and which are voiceless:

- /p/ as in penguin
- /b/ as in ball
- /t/ as in table
- /d/ as in dumb
- /k/ as in king
- /g/ as in girl
- /f/ as in fox
- /v/ as in vixen
- /ʃ/ as in sheep
- /ʒ/ as in leisure

### GIVE IT A GO!

Try reciting a nursery rhyme or reading a text aloud on first an egressive and then an ingressive breath. You should find that the egressive breath allows you to speak for much longer than an ingressive one. I have just tried it with 'Mary had a little lamb' and got through the whole thing on an outward breath and only the first two lines on an inward one:

Mary had a little lamb,  
Its fleece was white as snow.  
And everywhere that Mary went  
That lamb was sure to go.

It followed her to school one day.  
That was against the rules.  
It made the children laugh and play  
To see a lamb at school.



# What is a Loanword?



Languages are always changing, and although we might struggle to understand another language, different languages often share words.

So-called loanwords are 'borrowed' from one language by the speakers of another language. For example, banana was not originally an English word, but was borrowed either from Spanish or Portuguese. French has borrowed 'weekend' and 'computer' from English. And German has borrowed *allee* ('avenue') and *beton* ('cement') from French. Once people start to use a borrowed word, it becomes just another part of their language.

But it's not just words that are borrowed. Affixes, phrases and even whole sentences can be borrowed too. For example, English has borrowed the prefix *über* from German. We often attach it to a word to mean 'extreme', as in 'He's an über-geek'. Borrowed phrases in English include *et cetera* and *per cent* from Latin, while *c'est la vie!* ('such is life!') is a good example of a whole sentence that has been borrowed from French.

## Examples of words that have been borrowed into English



### Vuvuzela

you may have heard this colourful plastic trumpet at football matches. 'Vuvuzela' is the name given to the noisy instrument by South African football fans ('vuvu' describes the sound it makes!).



### Karaoke

this word has produced a new social experience in Europe, where people sing popular songs to recorded backing tracks - usually in front of their friends. It comes from Japanese, where *kara* means 'empty' and *oke* means 'orchestra'.



### Schadenfreude

this handy word comes from German, and means the pleasure we sometimes feel when someone else is unlucky. *Schaden* means 'damage' or 'injury' and *freude* means 'happy', helping us explain why we laugh at someone slipping on a banana skin!

## Etymology

Etymology is the study of the origin of words and how their meanings change.

A good way to find out more about where words come from is by looking at an etymological dictionary. The Online Etymology Dictionary ([www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)) lets you type in a word to find out where it comes from.

Think about the words pizza, samurai, aficionado and coach. Which languages do you think they have come from? Look them up at [www.etmyonline.com](http://www.etmyonline.com) and see if you're right.

## Examples of words that have been borrowed from English



### Computer

many loanwords, and many new words in general, are to do with technology. 'Computer' is an example of an English word adopted into French.



### System

the English word 'system' is found in Japanese, where it has been adapted to *shisutemu*.



### Baby

the German language has taken 'baby' from English to refer to a new human being. This is also an example of a new word gradually replacing an old word - 'baby' is now used more often than the older German word *saugling*.



## Why don't we all speak

# XHOSA?

**T**he very first modern humans probably came from somewhere in southern Africa around 200,000 years ago and spoke a click language, like the Khosian languages spoken today in the Kalahari Desert and like Xhosa spoken in South Africa (see box).

When these people started to move out of southern Africa, they of course took their language with them. We are all related to those people, so why, two hundred centuries later, don't we all speak a click language?

The answer to this question is that language is both biological (to do with how we are born) and social (to do with how we live our lives). Human babies are normally born with the ability to pick up language from their surroundings. But human babies are not like birds, bees or dolphins. Human babies are born with the *ability to learn* a language (or languages). They don't just *inherit* this language from their parents; their brains are biologically programmed to pick it up. The actual *language* these babies end up using (whether it is English, British Sign Language, Khoekhoe or any other language) will depend largely on what they hear or see when they are growing up. Some human babies, of course, hear and see more than one language from the start and they end up bilingual or multilingual. And because human babies don't end up using an identical copy of their parents' language(s), language changes.

What language – or languages – do you speak? Do other people in your class speak different languages? How many languages are there being spoken in your school? If you don't know the answer, perhaps you could do a survey to find out?

As early humans began to move out of southern Africa, around 100,000 years ago, they took with them their biological ability to pick up language. As groups of humans moved further away from each other there was less contact between these different groups.

After a time, their languages changed and became different from each other. As a result of all this change, more than 7,000 different languages are used around the world today.

7,000 different languages; that's quite some variety! But the language map of the world is actually even more complicated than this number suggests. There are only about 196 countries in the world, so 'language' is not the same thing as 'country'. Also, it's very difficult to accurately count numbers of language users, because we all have a different idea of what it means to 'use' a language. In fact, most people in the world are bi- or multilingual; they can use two or more languages and as there are no walls between languages, in many parts of the world people will mix bits from several languages, especially if they live in big, multicultural cities like London, or on a national border like the one between France and Germany, or if their family has moved from one country to another.

Finally, we get to the biggest complication of all; even within what we think of as a 'language' (English, for example) there is a HUGE amount of variety. Think of the differences between how people speak on the TV: Coronation Street, Eastenders, Ant and Dec, the BBC news...

Why is there so much variety? Well, we have already mentioned the fact that language changes over time and that people in different places end up speaking differently, but there are many other reasons for variety within languages. For example, your gender, your job, your hobbies, your social grouping and your ethnicity all affect your language use. Remember that language is social (as well as biological); meaning that languages and all their possible varieties are one way of showing which groups you belong to. Do you want to sound posh? Do your friends think that some ways of talking are more 'girly' than others? Do you have a hobby, such as football, that involves knowledge of lots of specialist words and phrases? You ex-



### Click languages

Click languages use some sounds that are made differently in the mouth from most human speech sounds. They include the sound we might make when we make a 'kiss' movement with our lips, or when we 'gee up' a horse or when we make a 'tutting' sound. But for click language speakers, these are part of the language, not just additional sounds used outside the language. If you want to hear these amazing languages, search the internet (videos) using the search term 'click language' and you will find many examples.

Xhosa is one of the official languages of South Africa and spoken widely in the eastern part of the country by over 7 million people. The name of the language begins with a click, represented in writing by 'X'.

The Kalahari desert extends across the borders of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana and is home to the San people who speak the Khosian languages which are endangered as fewer and fewer children grow up learning them as their first language.

press your identity through your use of language. Exactly how you do this will depend on where you are, who you are talking to and what you want people to think of you. Unfortunately, you are not always in control of how people judge you, based on your use of English or other languages. Find out more about the problems this causes by reading the article on page 23.

For more information about languages around the world, see: [www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)



See if you can match each region with a language that is commonly spoken there.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Albania              | Albanian   |
| Andorra              | Catalan  |
| Armenia              | Armenian   |
| Austria              | German   |
| Azerbaijan           | Azerbaijani  |
| Belarus              | Belarusian, Russian  |
| Belgium              | Dutch, French, German  |
| Bosnia & Herzegovina | Bosnian, Croatian, Serbian   |
| Bulgaria             | Bulgarian  |
| Croatia              | Croatian   |
| Cyprus               | Greek, Turkish   |
| Czech Republic       | Czech  |
| Denmark              | Danish   |
| England              | English  |
| Estonia              | Estonian   |
| Finland              | Finnish, Swedish   |
| France               | French   |
| Georgia              | Georgian   |
| Germany              | German   |
| Gibraltar            | English  |
| Greece               | Greek  |
| Greenland            | Greenlandic  |
| Hungary              | Hungarian  |
| Iceland              | Icelandic  |
| Ireland              | Irish, English   |
| Italy                | Italian  |
| Kosovo               | Albanian, Serbian  |
| Latvia               | Latvian  |
| Liechtenstein        | German   |
| Lithuania            | Lithuanian   |
| Luxembourg           | Luxembourgish, French, German  |
| Macedonia            | Macedonian   |
| Malta                | Maltese  |
| Moldova              | Moldovan   |
| Monaco               | French   |
| Montenegro           | Serbo-Croatian   |
| The Netherlands      | Dutch (+ West Frisian, Limburgish, Dutch Low Saxon, English, Papiamentu) |
| Northern Ireland     | English, Irish, Ulster Scots   |
| Norway               | Norwegian  |
| Poland               | Polish   |
| Portugal             | Portugese  |
| Romania              | Romanian   |
| Russia               | Russian  |
| San Marino           | Italian  |
| Scotland             | English, Gaelic, Scots   |
| Serbia               | Serbian  |
| Slovakia             | Slovak   |
| Slovenia             | Slovenian  |
| Spain                | Spanish (+ Catalan, Galician, Basque)                                    |
| Sweden               | Swedish  |
| Switzerland          | German, French, Italian, Romansch  |
| Turkey               | Turkish  |
| Ukraine              | Ukrainian  |
| Vatican City         | Latin, Italian   |
| Wales                | English, Welsh   |



# LANGUAGE

## puzzles

### Confounding Comparatives

Nouns and adjectives are types of words. A good test of whether a word is a noun is to see if you can put an article (*the* or *a*) in front of it. If you can, it's probably a noun. Adjectives describe some quality or property of a noun. For example, the happy linguist or a hungry shark.

In some languages, particular adjectives also have comparative and superlative forms. In English we use the suffix *-er* to form the comparative and *-est* to form the superlative.

Here are some examples:

small / smaller / smallest      poor / poorer / poorest  
long / longer / longest      kind / kinder / kindest

For longer English adjectives, we use *more* or *most* to form the comparative and superlative:

beautiful / more beautiful / most beautiful

**Hungarian is a language spoken by about 14 million people, mostly in Hungary and Romania. It's in a completely different language family than English, but like English it does have adjectives with special markers for their comparative and superlative forms.**


The left side of the table below lists five adjectives and their comparative and superlative forms. The right side shows their translations into Hungarian.


Can you figure out the general rule for forming comparatives and superlatives in Hungarian?

ENGLISH	HUNGARIAN
fast / faster / fastest	gyors / gyorsabb / leggyorsabb
rich / richer / richest	gazdag / gazdagabb / leggazdagabb
tall / taller / tallest	magas / magasabb / legmagasabb
clever / cleverer / cleverest	okos / okosabb / legokosabb
short / shorter / shortest	alacsony / alacsonyabb / legalacsonyabb

If you think you've got the rule, try forming the comparative and superlative of these Hungarian adjectives:

- fiatal ('young') → A: .....
- tág ('broad') → A: .....
- világos ('bright') → A: .....
- unalmas ('dull') → A: .....

 Hungarian is a language spoken by about 14 million people

  
Answers on page 26

# LANGUAGE

## puzzles

### French Foods

If you buy red onions and peppers, what colour are your purchases? The phrase 'red onions and peppers' implies that the onions are red, but what about the peppers? Think about the following French phrases and their translations and then try to answer the questions below:

oignons rouges      red onions  
poivrons rouges      red peppers  
oignons et poivrons      onions and peppers

You don't have to know French to answer these questions!

1

Translate each of the following phrases into French, producing the meanings in the second column. (The French for 'cucumbers' is *concombres*!)

- A. Red peppers and cucumbers ..... [the cucumbers are definitely not red]  
 B. Red peppers and onions ..... [the peppers may or may not be red]

2

If a dish is described as 'Scottish beef and mushrooms', can you decide if these statements are true?:


- A. The beef is definitely Scottish  
 B. The mushrooms are definitely Scottish

3

What is the French for 'Scottish beef and mushrooms'? Here are the words you need:

Beef – *bouef*  
Mushrooms – *champignons*  
Scottish – *écossais*

.....

 French is a language spoken by about 338 million people

  
Answers on page 26





# Lingo Penpal

In this issue we meet Arwen, who lives in Indonesia and is 10 years old.

What is your name?

Arwen.

What languages do you speak?

I speak English and Bahasa Indonesia (Indonesian).

Which language do you think of as your 'first language', if you have one?

I would say that English is my first language.

Can you tell us about when you speak each language?

My dad is English and my Mum is Indonesian. I speak to my dad in English and my mum in Bahasa Indonesian.

What differences do you notice between the languages - is one harder and one easier?

I find both of the languages quite easy.

Are you glad that you speak two different languages? If so, why?

Yes, I am glad! Speaking two languages means that I can communicate better with people who speak different languages.

How do you say 'Hello' and 'Goodbye' in the languages you speak?

In Bahasa Indonesia hello is 'Halo' and goodbye is 'dadah' or 'dah'.

What is your favourite word in each language you speak? What do they mean?

My favourite word in English is 'animals' because it means living creatures, which I like. In Bahasa Indonesia the word 'binatang' also means animals, so that is my favourite word in Bahasa Indonesian!



## Language Factfile: Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)

Over 700 languages are used in Indonesia. The **official language** of Indonesia is Indonesian, sometimes referred to as 'Bahasa Indonesia' (in Indonesian 'bahasa' means language!). Indonesian is spoken by around 163 million people. This makes it one of the most widely spoken languages in the world.

The vast majority of the Indonesian population speak Indonesian as well as other **regional languages**. In fact, it is reported that the most widely spoken language in Indonesia is the regional language **Javanese** with around 82 million **native speakers**.

Often, Indonesians have regional languages such as Javanese as their first language or **mother tongue** and speak Indonesian as their second language or **L2**. Indonesian is the mother tongue of around 23 million people and this is more common in urban areas, such as Indonesia's capital, Jakarta.

Indonesian (like most **'standard' registers**) is the language most used for things like education and news reporting, although often standard Indonesian is not spoken in daily conversation. Indonesian is from the Austronesian **language family** and has influences from Sanskrit, Arabic and Dutch.

## Glossary

### OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

An official language is the language that is given legal status in a country or smaller area. Typically, official languages are those used in places law courts and education and may not reflect the language that the majority of people speak in an area.

### REGIONAL LANGUAGE

A regional language is a language spoken in a smaller area than a country and that is different from the official language. For example, the official languages of India are Hindi and English but there are lots of regional languages such as Bengali, Tamil and Gujarati.

### JAVANESE

Javanese (also known as Djawa or Jawa) is a regional language spoken in Indonesia. It has many dialects such as Banten and High Javanese (Jawa Halus).

### NATIVE SPEAKER

A native speaker of a language is someone who has learnt a language from birth e.g. he was a native speaker of Chinese and learnt French at University.

### MOTHER TONGUE

This is the term used to describe someone's first language. This can also be called a native language, L1 or first language. E.g. her mother tongue was Russian.

### L2

L2 is the term used to describe someone's second language. An L2 is any language learned in addition to a mother tongue or native language.

### STANDARD REGISTER

A register is a type of language usually categorised by formality. When we describe a variety of language as being 'standard register', it means that it is more formal than day to day language e.g. a judge in a courtroom will use standard register.

### LANGUAGE FAMILY

Language families are groups of languages categorised by their history, a bit like a family tree but for languages! There are 10 major language families including Indo-European languages, Austronesian languages and Sino-Tibetan Languages.





# Opposites

Opposites are something that we understand at an early age. You may remember learning about them from children's books, with pictures teaching you about the difference between tall and short, hot and cold and happy and sad.

Opposites like *tall* and *short* are what we might call *normal opposites*. The thing about normal opposites is that they have the same meaning in most ways – except one significant one! For example, *tall* and *short* both describe some kind of height, but refer to different amounts of height. *Hot* and *cold* both describe temperature, but again they differ in the kind of temperature they refer to. How might you

describe *happy* and *sad* to show their similarities as well as their differences?

Opposites seem natural to us – we like to see things as black and white (spot the opposites there!). Because opposites seem so normal, we sometimes start to see them in new places. You might think of *apples* and *sweets* as opposites, if you're thinking about healthy food versus unhealthy food. Small children often think that *cats* and *dogs* are opposites because they are the main two types of pet in families, though of course there are in fact many other kinds of pets, like hamsters and guinea pigs. These are what we call *invented opposites* – unlike normal opposites, they are not *always* treated as opposites but can be seen as opposites in some situations.

When we use *invented* opposites, we often put them in certain structures (or *frames*) so that it is clear that we are using them as opposites. Just as you might say *The teacher was tall, not short*, or *He likes loud music, but she likes quiet music*, you can also say *My friend is nice, not noisy* or *He likes cakes, but she likes dinosaurs*. These *frames* help us to see words (*nice/noisy* and *cakes/dinosaurs*) as if they were opposites



# zə'tɪzəʊpəz



just in this sentence, even if they are not *normal* opposites. Perhaps the person with the *nice, not noisy* friend likes peace and quiet and thinks loud people are nasty, or the boy likes homely hobbies (baking cakes) while the girl prefers learning facts (about things like dinosaurs).

You can test this out by playing a simple game with a friend. Each write down a word for an object (noun) or activity (verb), and then use them to fill in the gaps. Put the nouns in the first frame and the verbs (with *-ing* on the end) in the second frame. You'll find that the frames make them seem like opposites, even if they are unusual!

It was a \_\_\_\_, not a \_\_\_\_  
She liked \_\_\_\_, he liked \_\_\_\_

Don't cheat – it's much more fun if you don't know what your friend is writing when you choose your word!

When you've filled in the gaps, think about how the two objects or activities could be seen as opposites. For example, if you get *She liked football, he liked gardening*, what could it be that makes football and gardening opposites? If you get something like *It was a refrigerator, not a bike*, what kind of situation can you imagine it being used in?

Part of how we understand *invented* opposites is by thinking of *normal* opposites. For example, we might try to understand the invented opposites *football* and *gardening* by thinking about what the activities involve – football is competitive and sporty, whereas gardening is more cooperative and peaceful. So football/gardening might make us think of more normal opposites like competitive/cooperative. Refrigerator/bike is trickier! Perhaps you wanted a bike for Christmas, but opened your present to find a refrigerator – the normal opposites we think of this time might be something like boring/fun.

# LANGUAGE

## puzzles

### Catalan and Basque colours

#### CATALAN...

is a language spoken in north-eastern Spain and southern France. The Catalan language has many similarities with Spanish and French.

#### BASQUE...

is a language spoken in north-western Spain and southern France. It has many differences from Spanish and French, but there are some similarities.

The table below gives you the names of some common colours in English, French and Spanish. It is up to you to fill in the columns for the same colours in Catalan and Basque!

**Catalan:** blanc / blau / gris / groc / marro / negre / porpra / rosa / taronja / verd / vermell

**Basque:** arrosa / beltz / berde / gorri / gris / hori / laranja / more / marroi / urdi / zuri

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SPANISH	CATALAN	BASQUE
black	noir	negro		
white	blanc	blanco		
grey	gris	gris		
pink	rose	rosa		
red	rouge	rojo		
blue	bleu	azul		
yellow	jaune	amarillo		
green	vert	verde		
orange	orange	naranja		
purple	violet	púrpura		
brown	brun	marrón		

You may find that the Basque colours are quite tricky! Have a look at the pairs of Basque foods and colours below, and see if they help you to complete the table:

alberjinia  
more

jogurt  
zuri

kafe  
beltz

meloi  
hori

tomate  
gorri



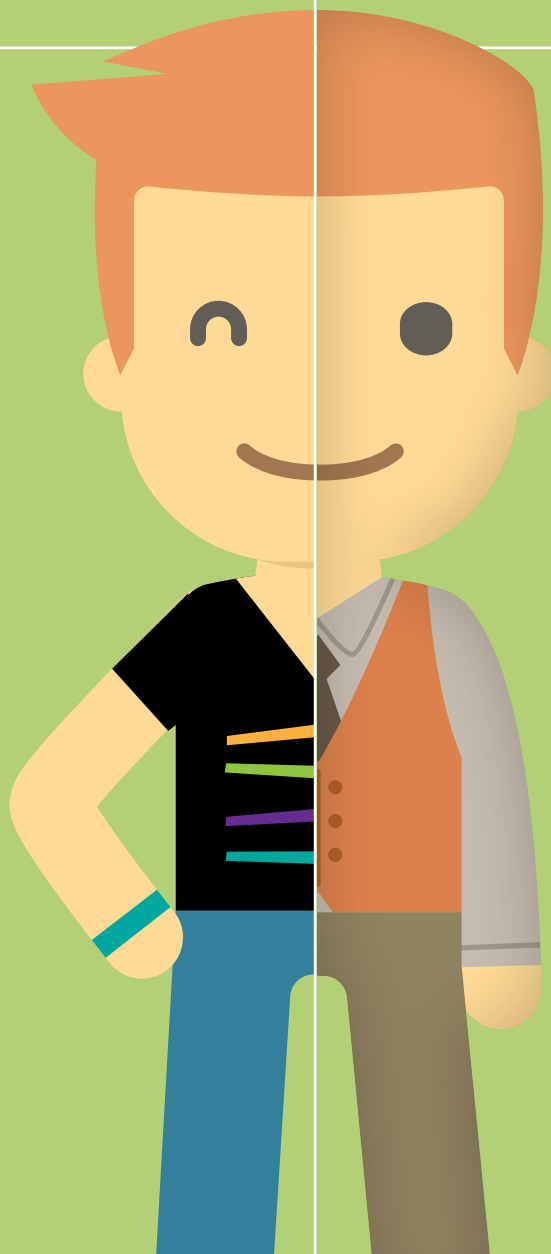
Answers on page 26

# What's Wrong with my Language?

## Description Versus Prescription

People have strong views about language – especially what counts as correct and incorrect. You often hear people complaining about television presenters mispronouncing particular words, or about journalists using ‘bad grammar’, or grocers putting apostrophes in the wrong place. Some people believe that English shouldn’t separate the two parts of the infinitive verb – e.g. ‘to get’, ‘to sing’ – (see box), by putting an adverb between the particle and the verb in an infinitive verb phrase (e.g. *to boldly go*). Other people get cross when they see sentences ending in prepositions (e.g. *Which station does the train stop at?* rather than *At which station does the train stop?*). Many people also think that some accents are somehow ‘better’ than others because they sound musical or pleasant. This can lead to them making judgements about speakers based on their accents. They might say that speakers of some accents sound uneducated or aggressive.

What do you think about



these issues? Do you think some accents are better than others? Where do you think that opinion comes from? Do you ever get told off for your language? What kinds of things are you criticised for, and why? Are any of these issues about language itself, or are they all about the way that people behave in different contexts?

Let’s take another common complaint from some English speakers – the double negative, as in the sentence: *I didn’t do nothing*. Many people claim that a sentence which contains a double negative is ungrammatical because a sentence like *I ain’t got no money* should mean that the speaker does have *some* money. Except that it doesn’t. First language speakers of English would **always** interpret that sentence as meaning *I have no money*. Two negatives make a positive in maths, but not in language.



# To unashamedly split the infinitive

There is no linguistic reason to object to the split infinitive (e.g. *to boldly go*). This objection began because the words we use to talk about English grammar (i.e. sentence structure) were borrowed from the ones used to describe Latin. And in Latin it is impossible to split the infinitive because the infinitive is just one word. *Amare*, for example, is the Latin infinitive form of *to love*, and if we were to try and insert an adverb in the middle of the word it would be meaningless. English works differently though. The infinitive in English is made up of two words so there is no reason at all why we cannot insert a third word between them. In some cases, there is no other option. In a sentence like *I beg you to quickly give up dancing*, moving the adverb *quickly* can give the sentence a very different meaning to the one intended. Try it for yourself.

## All languages are equal

If we look at the linguistic facts then it becomes obvious that one language or dialect is never intrinsically better than another. The sociolinguist Peter Trudgill makes four points that neatly explain why all languages should be valued equally:

### 1. All languages are equally complex and structured.

Let's compare a European language such as English or German with, say, Aymara, a language spoken by native communities in Bolivia and Peru. It is not true that the Aymara language is less complex because its speakers are not as technologically advanced as a society. In fact, the languages of such communities are just as complex as those spoken in more developed societies. They make use of a variety of tenses, they have specific methods for forming new words, and so on. It's simply not true that some languages are more complicated (and therefore 'better') than others.

### 2. All languages can express the same range of ideas, information and emotion.

People sometimes say that some languages are better for expressing certain ideas than others. But in fact there is *nothing* that can be said in one language that cannot also be expressed in another. Just think - this **MUST** be the case, otherwise it would be impossible to translate from one language to another. Languages don't always match up, word for word, but it will always be possible to translate from one language into another, even if you have to use a phrase instead of one word. The Hungarian word *kokárda* describes a brooch made from the colours of the Hungarian flag that women used to make for men

going off to fight in the 1848 Hungarian revolution against the Austrians. It is impossible to translate *kokárda* into an equivalent English noun but we can still describe what it means.

### 3. All varieties of one particular language are equally complex and structured.

For exactly the same reasons, all the *varieties* of a particular language are equally complex and structured. This includes dialects like Cockney, Geordie or Scouse in English. The French spoken in the North of France may be different from that spoken in the South, but it is no more or less complex in structural terms.

What variety of your language do you speak? Is it a regional variety? Do you also use a Standard variety of your language?

### 4. All varieties of one particular language can express the same ideas, information and emotions

Just as with different languages, all the varieties of one particular language can say the same things. In English, for instance, the Yorkshire dialect has words which are not shared by all other varieties of English. For example, while Standard English uses the words *here* and *there* to indicate closeness to and distance from the person speaking, some varieties in Yorkshire make use of *here*, *there* and *yonder* - meaning something like 'even further away than *there*'. Standard English might not use *yonder* but that doesn't mean we can't express its meaning.

There are also different words to refer to things in different English dialects. How do you refer to an individual portion of bread in English? Do you say *roll*, *bap*, *breadcake*, *bun*

or use some other word? What about the small pedestrian lane between buildings or houses in towns and cities? In Leeds (Yorkshire) it's called a *ginnel*, but in other places it can be an *alley* or a *snicket*.

In purely logical terms then, it is not the case that some languages are better than others, or that some accents and dialects are better than others. Linguistics celebrates variation in all its forms. This is what shows that human language is alive and responding to changes in society.

Can you think of any words you use that your parents or older brothers and sisters don't use? Do these words refer to technology (phones, computers etc.) or to culture (pop music, fashion etc.)? Do you think you will still be using the same words when you are an adult? Ask your family members what words they used when they were your age and see whether they still use them!

## Linguistic description

Outside linguistics, people often think that languages and language varieties are not equal in value. Instead, there is a lot of effort made telling people how they *should* use language. Linguists call this 'linguistic prescription' (like a doctor, giving you a prescription for medicine!). Linguists themselves are only interested in being *descriptive*, not *prescriptive*. Rather than telling people what they should and shouldn't do when they speak and write, linguists are simply interested in describing what people *actually* do. If we want to know how language works, we can only do this through observation, without saying that one thing is 'right' and another 'wrong'.

## Appropriateness

Because linguists make no judgment about which variety of a language is best, or whether one language is better than another, people often think that this means that there is no such thing as a good or bad way to use language; in effect, that anything goes. This is not true - but it's more complicated than simply saying that language use is right or wrong.

Think about it this way. If you work in a bank, you probably wear a suit to work. If you work in a market, on the other hand, you would be much more likely to dress in a more casual manner - perhaps in jeans and a jumper. In functional terms there is no difference at all

between going to work in a suit and wearing a jumper and jeans. Both options cover the body and keep you warm. But it would look odd if a bank clerk turned up for work wearing jeans, just as it would look strange for a market stallholder to wear a suit. Our choice of what to wear is determined by what is appropriate for the situation we are in and the conventions linked to that situation. Bankers are expected to look slick and professional and society has decided that a suit is the conventional way to convey this image. For a market trader working outside all day, comfort and warmth are much more important.

The same principle of appropriateness applies to language. If we are talking to friends that we've known from childhood, we are likely to slip into our natural accent. This is the accent that comes most naturally to you. We might well use dialect words or slang and we might use a lot of non-standard language which uses different structures and forms to the standard language. None of this will matter at all. Indeed, it would sound very odd if we tried to speak to our friends as if they were the boss at work, or the headteacher of our school. Our friends would think we were behaving oddly! But if we go for a job interview and speak as we would do to friends in an informal situation we are not as likely to make a good impression. This is because what's appropriate for one situation isn't necessarily appropriate for another. A job interview requires the candidate to put forward a professional image and to demonstrate that they will fit in well with the company and its other employees. Using a language variety that breaks too many normal conventions is liable to damage our ability to achieve these objectives and is likely to hinder our chances of being offered the job. The same is true when it comes to writing something for school work. If you write in the style you would use for an email or a text to your friends, your work may not be taken seriously.

Therefore, rather than arguing about what is right or wrong in language, it makes more sense to develop a sound understanding of what the appropriate form of language is for a given situation. This ability to move effortlessly between styles, registers and varieties is far more valuable than an illogical list of things to avoid. Description not prescription is the name of the game!

# LANGUAGE

## puzzles



### The answers!

#### PLASTIC PLURALS

In Turkish, which plural form to use depends on which vowels are found in the root word. Root words containing the vowel *e* get the *-ler* plural form, and root words containing the vowel *a* get the *-lar* plural form. This kind of rule is known as *vowel harmony*. Only a few other European languages, such as Finnish and Hungarian, have vowel harmony.

According to the vowel harmony rule, the plurals of the four words are:

1. bacaklar
2. tepeler
3. danslar
4. etler

#### CONFOUNDING COMPARATIVES

For the Hungarian words in the table, the comparative is always formed by adding *-abb* to the end of the word. The superlative is the same as the comparative, except that we also add *leg-* to the beginning of the word.

According to this rule, the comparative and superlative forms of the four Hungarian words are:

1. fiatalabb, legfiatalabb
2. tágabb, legtágabb
3. világosabb, legvilágosabb
4. unalmasabb, legunalmasabb

#### FRENCH FOODS

- 1a. poivrons rouges et concombres
- 1b. poivrons et oignons rouges
- 2a. yes
- 2b. no
3. champignons et boeuf écossais

#### CATALAN AND BASQUE COLOURS

ENGLISH	FRENCH	SPANISH	CATALAN	BASQUE
black	noir	negro	negre	beltz
white	blanc	blanco	blanc	zuri
grey	gris	gris	gris	gris
pink	rose	rosa	rosa	arrosa
red	rouge	rojo	vermell	gorri
blue	bleu	azul	blau	urdin
yellow	jaune	amarillo	groc	hori
green	vert	verde	verd	berde
orange	orange	naranja	taranja	laranja
purple	violet	púrpura	porpra	more
brown	brun	marrón	marro	marroi

# Goodbye

ENGLISH

Au revoir

FRENCH

Adiós

SPANISH

Ha det

NORWEGIAN

Auf Wiedersehen

GERMAN

Farvel

DANISH

Addio

ITALIAN

Hejdå

SWEDISH

Do widzenia

POLISH

ДО СВИДАНИЯ (do svidaniya)

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