

ANOTHER 20 THINGS YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT THE WORLD OF LANGUAGES

SARDINIAN, spoken on the island of Sardinia, is the oldest Romance language still in use, and it is believed to be the closest living language to Latin.

Have you ever heard of **KARELIAN**? It is a Finnic language spoken in Northwestern Russia and parts of Finland. Karelian is just one example of Europe's unique linguistic heritage.

THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS ...? Well, most people assume it to be English but, in fact, the US does not have an 'official language'!



The **CAUDATE** is a brain region in the middle of the brain. It helps bilinguals switch between languages but it also keeps both languages separate. Experienced bilinguals use the caudate so much that it changes its size.

THE MOST LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE COUNTRIES IN THE WORLD

Papua New Guinea	840
Indonesia	711
Nigeria	517
India	456
U.S.A.	328 languages

One rule that **ENGLISH SPEAKERS** follow without noticing is that adjectives have a distinct order: opinion, size, age, shape, colour, origin, material, purpose. For example, "my Greek fat big wedding" sounds a bit odd, but "my big fat Greek wedding" does sound correct.

In **ITALIAN** the word *latte*, which English speakers use when referring to coffee with milk, actually means "milk". Remember this when you want to order a coffee on your next trip to Italy!

XD

Different languages have their own equivalents of "hahaha" to represent laughter in text. You might have seen the Spanish *jajaja*, but you probably don't know the Thai 555 (5 is pronounced "ha" in Thai), the Japanese *www* (*w* comes from *wara* (笑) - "to laugh") or the Portuguese *kkkkk*.

CREOLE LANGUAGES

are new languages that develop when people from different countries talk and create new words to better understand each other. An example is Haitian Creole, a combination of French, West African languages, and native Taino languages.

Did you know that **IRISH, SCOTTISH GAELIC AND MANX** have no single words for "yes" and "no"? To answer a question you use verb forms. So the answer to "Did they go home?" would be "(they) did go" or "(they) didn't go".

"OLD" GERMAN

Around the year 1700, Germans emigrated to the U.S.A. and lived in enclosed religious communities. That is why you can still come across an 18th century German in Pennsylvania.



The **CYRILLIC ALPHABET** was initiated by the brothers Cyril and Methodius from Thessaloniki who worked as missionaries among Slavic peoples in Central and Eastern Europe.

ALBANIAN, GREEK, TURKISH and BULGARIAN

can get pretty confusing! Did you know that shaking your head can mean "yes" whilst nodding can mean "no"?

CLICK SOUNDS

Only few languages use click sounds, mostly in Southern Africa. They distinguish between 5 click sounds depending on where they are produced in the mouth.



ICELANDIC avoids using foreign words and prefers to form new words from ancient Viking words. So the word for computer *tölva* is formed from the old words *tala* (number) and *völva* (prophetess).

SHELTA or GAMMON

is a language spoken by Irish travellers or *Rilantu Mincéirí*. It is an instance of a "cryptic" language that was developed to communicate with each other and also to protect their privacy in regards to majority communities.

TO GENDER OR NOT TO GENDER

Some languages are based on genderless grammar systems, such as Turkish and English. Others have two or three genders, like German and Greek. Languages with four or more genders are quite rare: E.g. Zande (Congo) has genders for masculine, feminine, animate (e.g. animals), and inanimate.



In **GREENLANDIC** a single word can have a fairly complex meaning: e.g. *nalaasaaru-suummerujussuaraluarpunga*, can be translated as "suddenly, I really wanted to just lie down and rest, but...".

5%

Only 5% of **PORTUGUESE** speakers live in Portugal. Unsurprisingly, with populous countries such as Brazil and Mozambique having it as their official language.



Many **FINNISH WORDS** have a very literal translation. Refrigerator becomes "ice cupboard" (*jääkaappi*), computer translates to "knowledge machine" (*tietokone*) and the word for treadmill (*juoksumatto*) simply means "running carpet".

European Day of Languages
26 September

