

# Parrot Time

The Thinking of Speaking

Issue #16 July / August 2015

**Polyglot Events All Around The World**  
Jimmy Mello shares his knowledge of various meetings

**Playing Games with Language**  
How gamification can be used in language learning

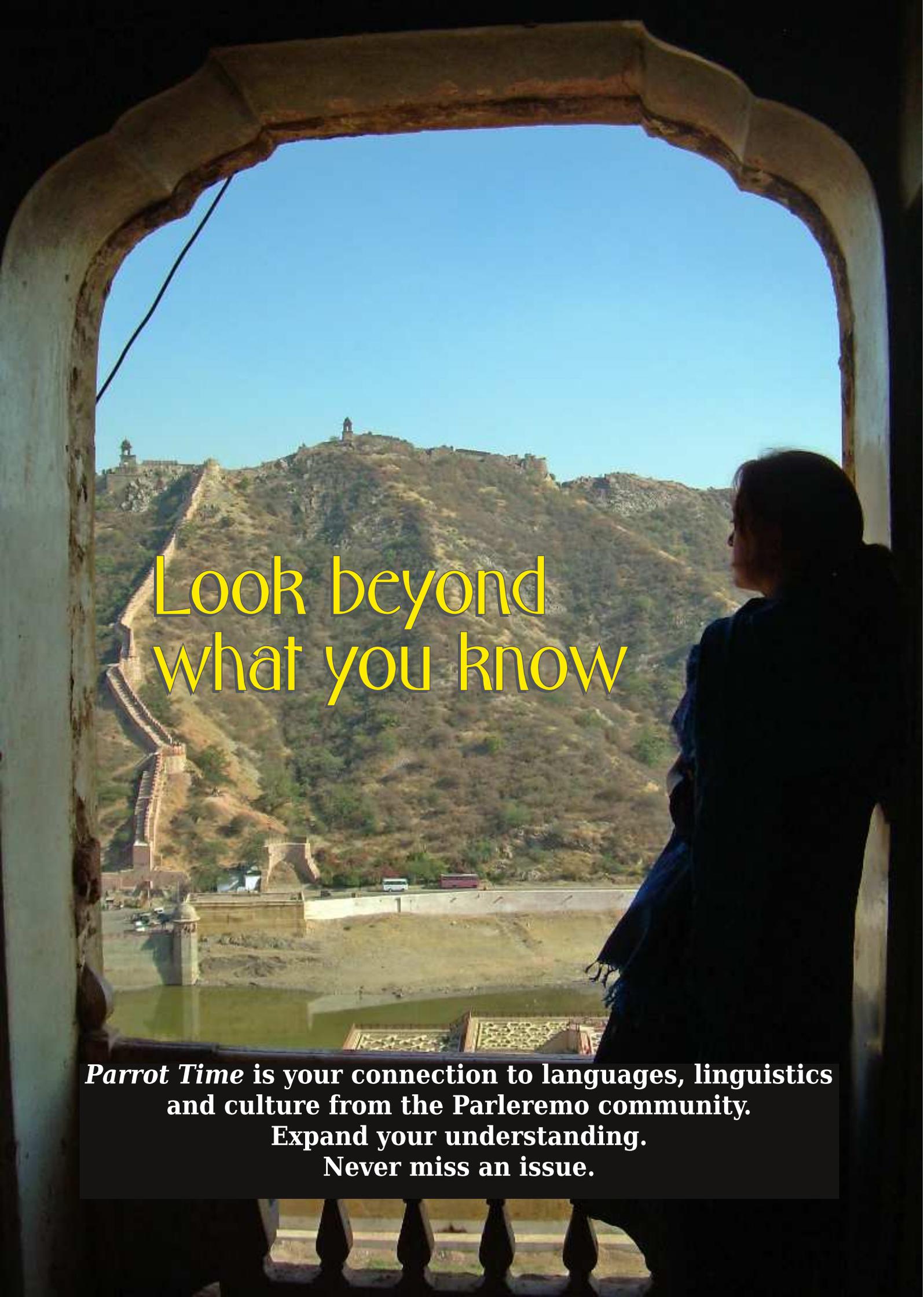
Polyglot Gathering  
15 - 18<sup>th</sup> Jun  
Berlin, Germany  
www.polyglotberlin.com

Polyglot Gathering  
1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> May 2015  
Berlin, Germany  
www.polyglotberlin.com

**Spanish E-training – The ‘Big Bang’ Investment**  
A look at how companies can improve their workforce

**Can a Language Die?**  
Serious question about endangered languages



A woman in silhouette is looking out from an arched window. The view outside shows a hillside with a fort on top, a long wall leading up the hill, and a dry well in the foreground. The sky is clear and blue.

Look beyond  
what you know

***Parrot Time* is your connection to languages, linguistics  
and culture from the Parleremo community.  
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# Parrot Time

Parrot Time is a magazine covering language, linguistics and culture of the world around us.

It is published by Scriveremo Publishing, a division of Parleremo, the language learning community.

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**Cover:** Guides to the 2015 Polyglot Gathering in Berlin on top of a collection of various language books.

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Talar þú íslensku?

*Learn a language,  
Make friends,  
Have fun!*

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## Studying in Summer

For those living in the Northern hemisphere, these months of July and August are the glorious months of summer. We head to the beach to soak up the hot temperatures and recharging sun rays. Swimming and people watching round out this annual pilgrimage to the shore.

Or if the sunny beaches are not quite your thing, you are hopping in a car or on a train, plane or boat to get somewhere, anywhere, away from your current location to take a relaxing vacation or tackle a new adventure.

Many of us might feel guilty about doing this, and may even hold back from it, because we feel we are neglecting our language studies. How can we be memorizing new vocabulary while we are splashing around in the ocean? What will happen to our Memrise and Anki decks if we skip them for a few days or weeks while we have some fun?

My advice is simple: let it go! Your languages are not going to abandon you if you just take an extended break. We all need to power down and walk away to revitalize our minds and bodies. Even schools around the world have breaks during this time to let the students enjoy themselves for a while without being plagued with constant reading, writing and maths work.

These times of relaxation are short, so you must take advantage of them while you can!

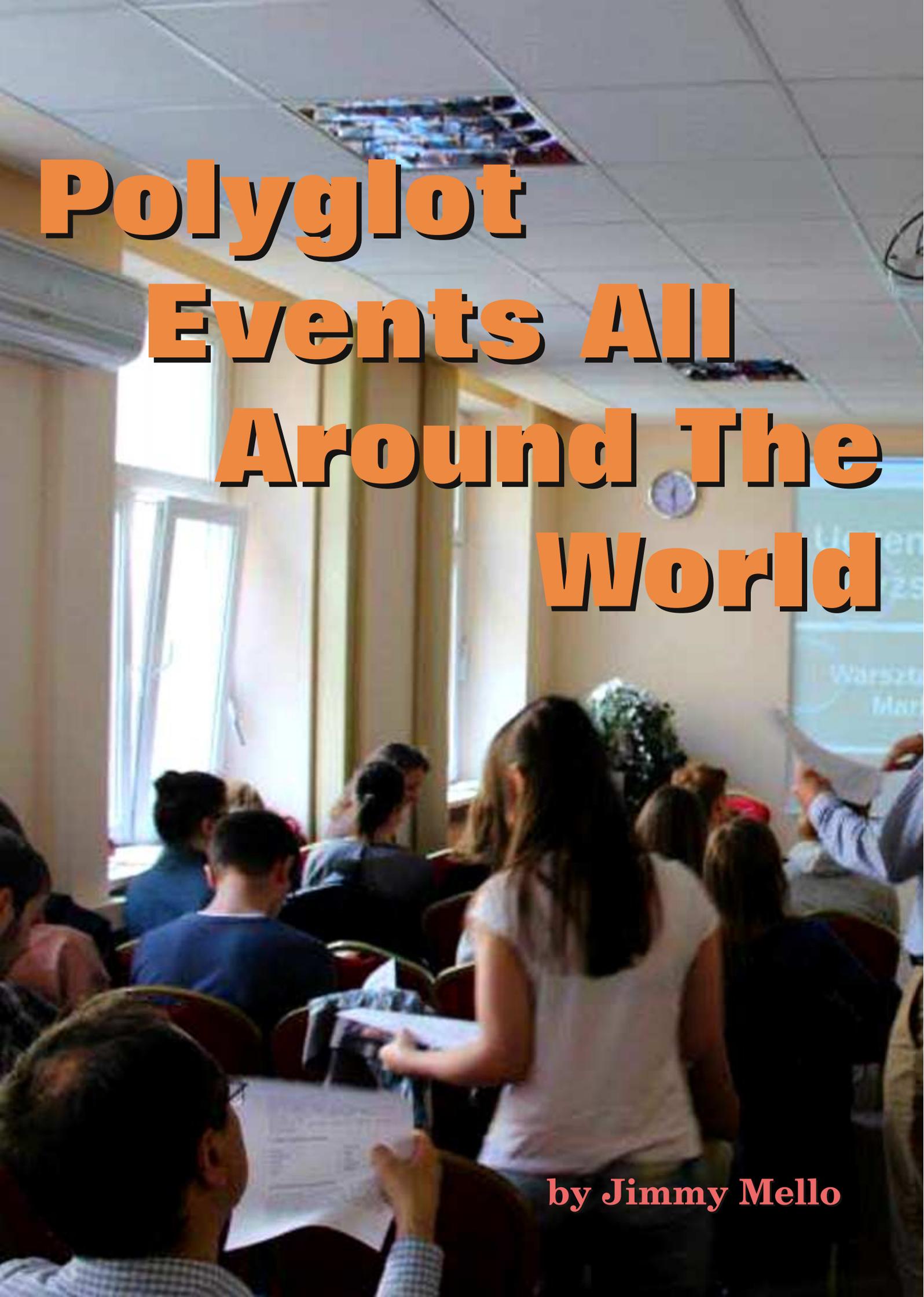
If you feel you really *must* study instead of going to the beach or vacation, there are still ways. You can take along portable versions of your study books to the beach, or employ the use of a portable device and use ebooks and applications. You can also slip a digital player into your bag or pocket filled with your favourites Pimsleur or Michel Thomas audio courses.

Whether you give yourself a break or continue studying into your summer activities, make sure you *have fun* while doing it. And be sure to take along Parrot Time to make your summer complete!



*Erik Zidowecki*

ERIK ZIDOWECKI  
EDITOR IN CHIEF



# **Polyglot Events All Around The World**

**by Jimmy Mello**

Marlon Couto Ribeiro, from  
Sekrety Poliglotów, giving  
a presentation to a room of  
language enthusiasts

*You Are  
Not Alone*

When you think about Berlin, you may think about the Second World War, organization, or polite and organized people. But, for me and for many polyglots in our growing community, it is the city of friendship. Yes, every year, we meet over 300 people from all round the world to exchange knowledge, experience and practise languages. It is the Polyglot Gathering, organized by the talented team of Judith Meyer and Chuck Smith along with many marvellous volunteers.

In this article, I'm going to share some thoughts and reflections about this year's Gathering.

### First, what is a gathering?

The talented polyglot Richard Simcott decided with other polyglot friends to create a Polyglot Conference, and the first one took place in Budapest, Hungary. This was the first step towards big events. Some very well known YouTube Polyglots attended the event, which lasted only two days. Besides lectures, it included some cultural activities. After the Conference, the German Polyglot Judith Meyer decided to create a similar event, but following a more informal, casual structure, inspired by the Esperanto events. So, in the year of 2014, the language of many polyglots really started to change. It's a polyglot version of "out of the closet" because from every part



Gareth Popkins, Jimmy Mello and Ruslan Kokorin

of the world, from Brazil to China, from Argentina to Japan, and including Italy, UK, Poland, Russian and many other countries, people came to attend. It started to bring out talented polyglots not as famous who, due to the gathering, got the chance to spread and inspire many others. Emanuelle Marinne, a talented polyglot from Italy, is just one example.



Jimmy Mello presenting at the Polyglot Gathering in Berlin, 2015



Polyglot Workshop in London with Olly Richards, Alex Rawlings (presenting) and Richard Simcott

## What is the purpose of this?

Well, after taking part in it twice, I consider it as my yearly meeting with my good polyglot friends, and as Berlin is quite central, it's easy for everybody to attend. During this year's gathering in 2015, the number of participants doubled that of the first one, and it is a perfect environment for networking, language practice, exchanging of materials and making new friends. We also get updated about languages in general.

## Is it expensive?

Not at all! Everything is created to be affordable, it's a nice and convenient venue, and it's possible to share rooms with other participants and improve your relationships with your new friends. If you have a more intropective personality, you can share a room with one person or stay on your own. For a minimum extra charge, you get the breakfast, lunch and dinner (meat, vegetarian and even

vegan), so it is definitely worthy investment in yourself.

## Ok, I got it, but should I attend to this event?

Oh, if you are a language learner, enthusiast or polyglot, you should not attend - you *must* attend! This is the chance to show that we are a strong and friendly community, and that Polyglotism is not only available to a few of us. You have to stand up, and show that polyglots are real people, and we can inspire others.

## Who usually goes to the Gathering?

Everyone from newbies, that is those who have just arrived and are starting right now to learn their first language, to experts, like the bestseller Benny Lewis from *Fluent in Three Months*, Richard Simcott, the organizer of Polyglot conference, Lindsay Dow, the blogger from *Lindsay Does Languages*, Jimmy Mello,

the founder of *Mello Method Organization* and the presenter of the well known Polyglot Podcast and Television, *My Polyglot*, Olly Richards, the man behind *I will teach you a language* site and podcast, and others.

### What sort of lectures, how long and how many are there simultaneously?

There are two auditoriums and some small classrooms, so usually you have to choose among them, but don't worry - the organization records everything and put them for free on the YouTube channel.

The lectures are about everything, as you will be able to see in the images of this article. We talk on subjects ranging from language researches to intro lessons from a language, along with small but dense workshops, like one on Simultaneous Interpretation this year, delivered by Lydia.



Jimmy Mello showing his goods at the Book Fair

### Are there other events like this during the year?

Yes. Though we have decided collectively and democratically to keep the gathering in \*\*\*\*\*, for the sake of everyone the Polyglot Conference takes place in different places like Budapest, Novi Sad, and,

this year, New York City. We have other small events like the Polyglot Clubs and Polyglot Workshop, taking place in many cities and hosted by many important polyglot.

During the gathering we have the opportunity to practice and improve our languages.



Various language lovers at the Polyglot Club

### Polyglot Workshops and Secret of the Polyglots

Other events which happen every now and again are the workshops. Last July, I had the opportunity to attend the [Polyglot Workshop in London](#) run by [Olly Richards](#), [Richard Simcott](#) and [Alex Rawlings](#). This workshop happens during a whole day and is smaller than the Gathering, with usually around 20 people, which means that you can have direct contact with the specialists, ask them your own tailored questions, and take the answer from the source. This event is headed

by Richard and Alex, but from time to time they have the company of other polyglots, as Olly in London, and I, Jimmy Mello in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. During the workshops, the speakers present the subject, but they invite you to take part in small groups, deciding and building the knowledge together.

It is a nice event to get in touch with other polyglots and language enthusiasts. As I mentioned before, this sort of event is the perfect tool to keep you motivated and in tune with your aims.

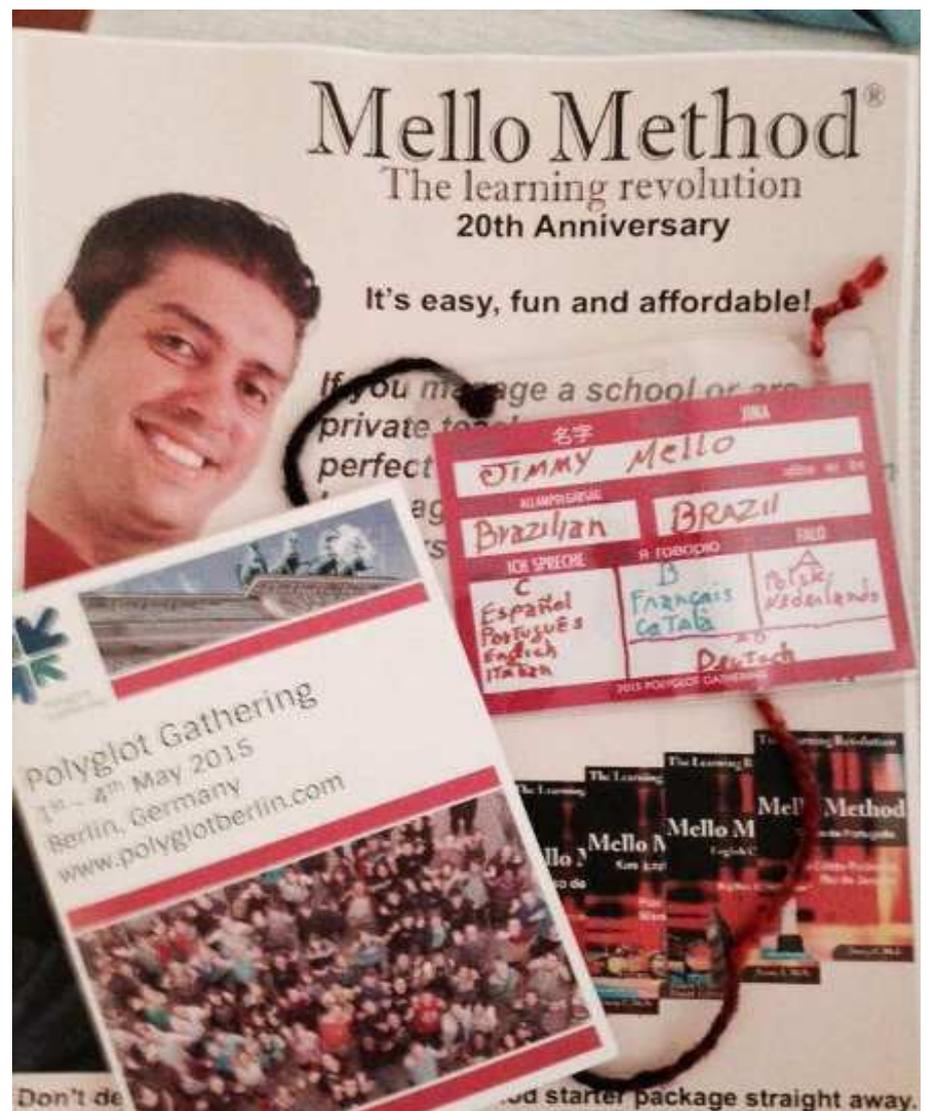
On the other side, we have another, bigger event, but this one is held only in Poland and in the Polish language. It is usually cheaper than the Polyglot Workshops and is headed by the talented polyglots Konrad (Polish) and Marlon Ribeiro (Brazilian). Like the Workshops, they have other polyglot guests. The main difference between these events is that the first one has lots of practice and group activities and is more focused on polyglots, while the second is full of precious pieces of information, mainly focused on newbies. Unfortunately, I could not attend the *Secrets of the Polyglots* yet, but I had the chance to read their books. That is another difference - you can purchase this important material to follow after the event.

Finally, we have the Polyglot Conference, which is also headed by Richard Simcott, and this year, Alex Rawlings and Ellen Jovin will be joining him in running it. I haven't been to this event yet, but as I'm going to attend to

the next one in NYC, I will be able to judge and give you my impressions. As far as I know, it is a little bit different from the Gathering, first because the presenters *do not* accept speakers; they choose them according to their own criteria. This year, it seems that it is an 80% North American event and is supposed to be more academic, even though some presenters have no academic background in this area. Another difference is the length, as it is only two days long, compared to the Gathering which is 4 and 1/2 days long. I'm really looking forward to attending it and

better understanding their criteria.

As you can see, you are not alone. The polyglot community is really growing up and getting organized. I'm proud to be part in this nice community, and not only being there, but taking part actively. I strongly believe that we are responsible for a polyglot world, with fewer barriers and more respect. In our events, it doesn't matter the colour of your skin, your sexual orientation, your religion or anything else. It is supposed to be the best self-created community that really works. **PT**



# Polyglot Events All Around The World - You Are Not Alone

## Scenes from events

(clockwise, from left to right): Picnic after the Gathering; Special event during the Gathering called Jomo Concert in 25 languages; Huge crowd at the Polyglot Conference in Novi Sad; Presenter Konrad Jerzak at Sekrety Poliglota (Secrets of the Polyglot); Polyglots Olly Richards, Jimmy Mello, Alex Rawlings and Richard Simcott



*Jimmy Mello is a neurolinguist and holds two degrees: one in Linguistics and other in Educational Science. He is a polyglot and has been learning and teaching languages for over 20 years. He is fluent in English, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese, and he can also speak Catalan, French, German, Dutch and Polish at different levels. He has developed a new method suitable for teaching any foreign language. He currently lives in Brazil where he runs his own language school, which he established in 1995. Find him at: [www.mellomethod.com](http://www.mellomethod.com), [www.mypolyglot.com](http://www.mypolyglot.com), [Twitter.com/jimmymello](https://twitter.com/jimmymello), and [www.facebook.com/jimmymelloreal](https://www.facebook.com/jimmymelloreal).*



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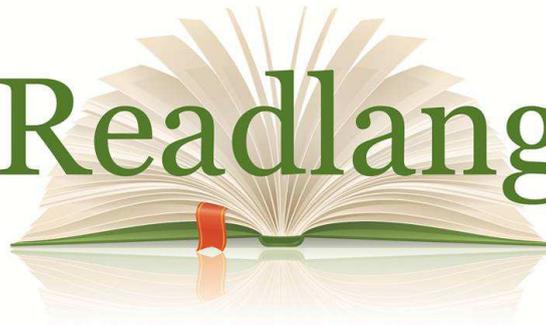
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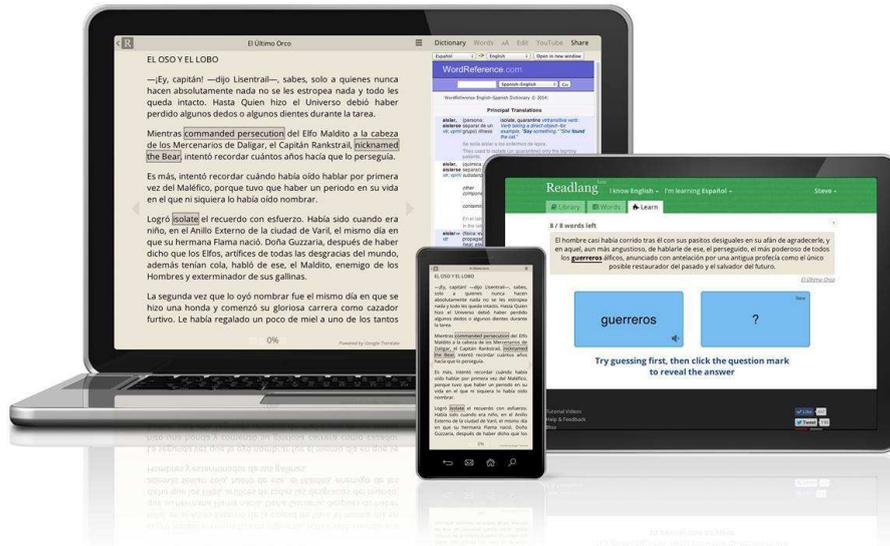


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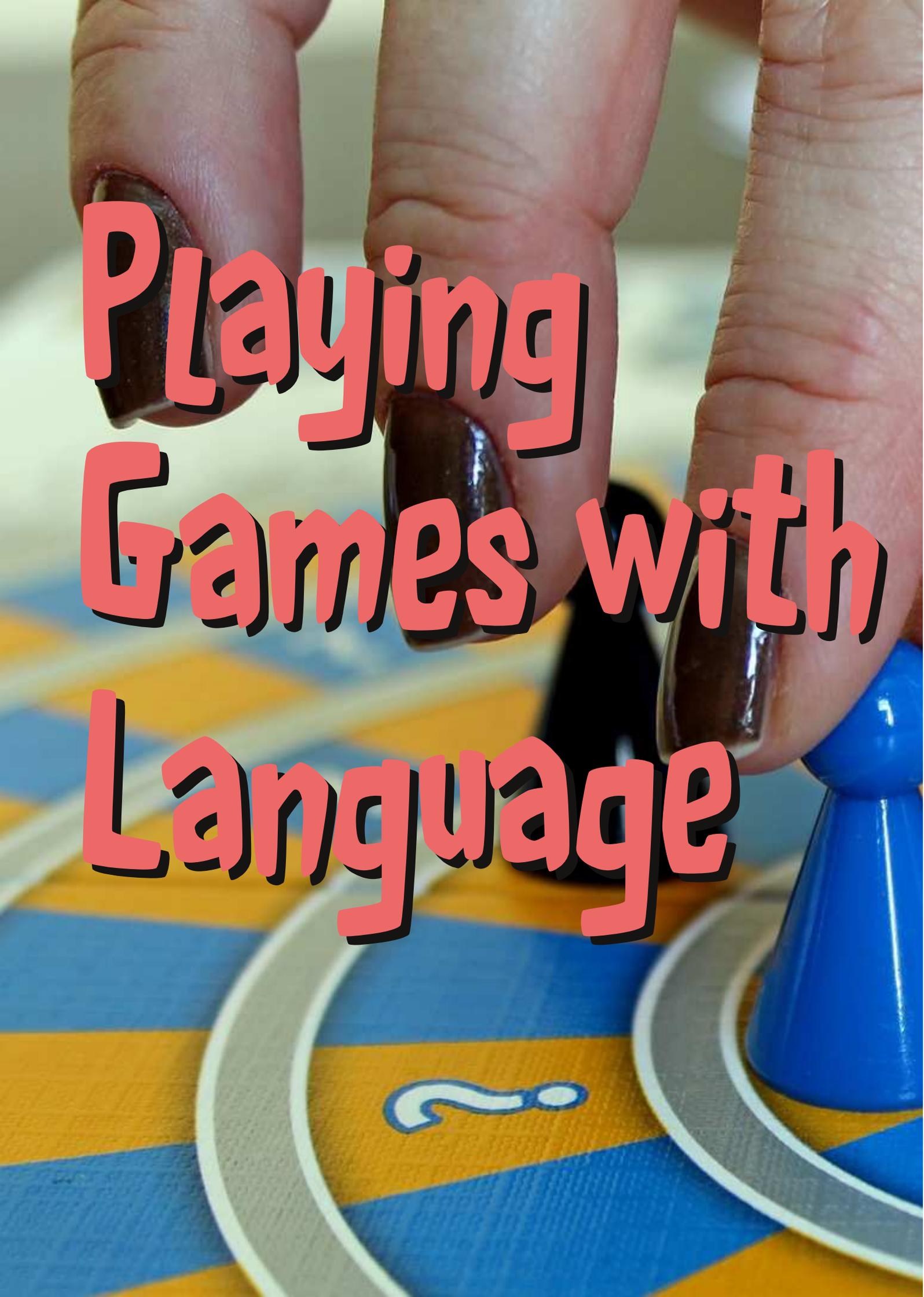
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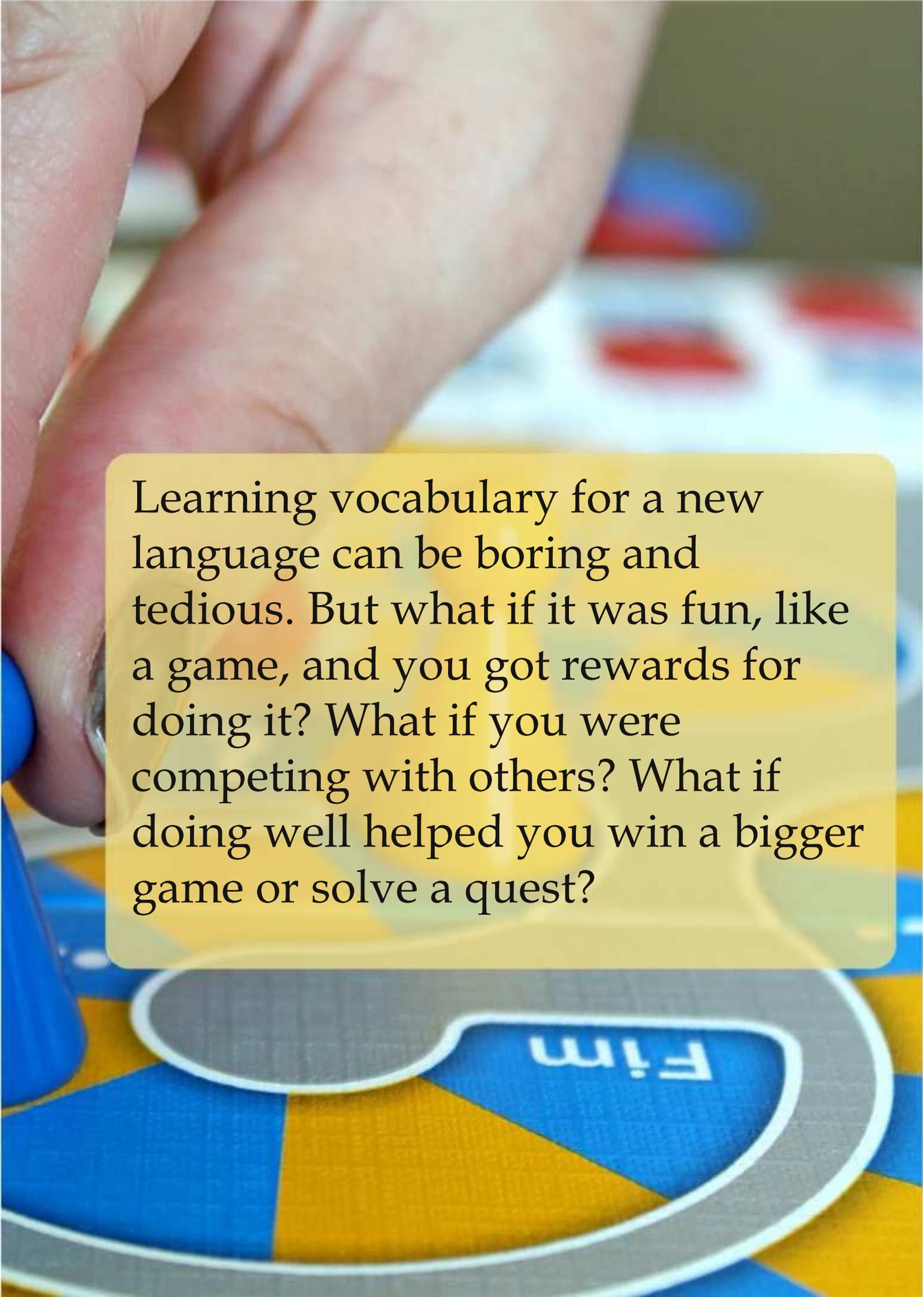
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# Playing Games with Language



Learning vocabulary for a new language can be boring and tedious. But what if it was fun, like a game, and you got rewards for doing it? What if you were competing with others? What if doing well helped you win a bigger game or solve a quest?

One of the current ideas being put to use in learning systems online is that of *gamification*. That 5-syllable word essentially means taking something which is normally a lot of work to do and making it fun, like a game. The idea isn't new. People have been trying to make boring chores fun for decades. Even that famous nanny Mary Poppins explained "In every job that must be done, there is an element of fun. You find the fun and snap! The job's a game."

Putting this strategy to work on the web, however, is not always so simple. There are a couple different approaches available that can be using independently or alongside others. Naturally, people have been working to apply these gamification techniques to learning languages. Here are some of the most popular forms:

### And the Award Goes To

Giving out awards when someone performs a certain task is the most basic method of funning up your learning. These awards usually take the form of badges, which are just graphic images displayed on a person's profile. The idea is that people will want to show how much they are



Just like trophies in real life, awards can be given in online learning

achieving, and will thus try to earn all the badges they can.

Because a badge can be given out for pretty much anything, this gaming method is the easiest to implement across most systems. For example, on a language site, a person could earn badges just for participating in a forum discussion, responding to a person's question on a language, or uploading a link to a new site. I've even seen a few systems in which you get rewarded just for showing up each day, like an attendance award. That one encourages people to come back daily to the site.

A popular learning site that takes this method to a

unique level is Busuu. This site revolves around the idea of a "language garden", in which your success is reflected in a visual, animated garden. For example, if you have learned the basic vocabulary for fruits, a fruit tree might appear in your garden. If you did a unit on transportation, you might get a car or an airplane.

Furthermore, as you practise on the site, you are awarded "Busuu Berries", which can then be used to "purchase" other items, like a scarecrow or a garden gnome, to fill out your garden. If you pay for the Busuu premium membership, you get a larger variety of extras to add, so the gamification is even used to entice you to buy stuff with real money.

### Practice Makes Perfect

While handing out badges might be the simplest way to implement a gamification element, actual games would be the most obvious. It is also



Busuu uses images and icons to show a user's achievements



Using images as part of a multiple choice exercise

fairly easy to utilize, but only to a certain point.

For learning languages, you would most likely use vocabulary and phrase learning for this. One game could be simple multiple choice questions, in which the person is given a word or phrase in one language and be asked to select the closest match from a few possible answers in the other language. Multiple choice questions have been used in classrooms for over a century as a means for drilling lessons as well as tests.

A slightly more modern implementation of the multiple choice system is to enhance the text answers with images, or even remove the text answer completely and let the player choose from the best pic-

ture. This is pretty much what passes now for “lessons” in some big name software and language sites, like Rosetta Stone / LiveMocha. Selecting from possible matches might be the only component, or it be part of other testing methods, like filling in an answer, in a single lesson.

Other games which are popular are *Memory*, in which a person turns over “cards” to find matching pairs of words (one in each language), *Word Searches*, in which the player looks for words in a two dimensional grid of letters, and *Hangman*, in which the person tries to guess a word, one letter at a time, without making too many wrong guesses.

## Would You Like to Play a Game of Chess?

All of these games listed above are played alone, with the person not competing against anyone else. The next level of gamification is having learners competing with others, either directly or indirectly.

The indirect way looks almost the same to the single player system, except that you earn points from each game and those scores are compared to others. For example, if players Alpha and Beta both play single versions of a memory game and earn points for the fewest wrong answers and time taken to complete, then their scores would be displayed for others to see.

The displaying of scores can be a very strong component of gamification. People like to see how well they are performing compared to others. While badges let them display their progress personally, direct comparisons on a *leaderboard* take the competition to a whole new level.

*Leaderboards*, as the name implies, show which people are scoring the highest, or leading, in any competition. These are normally used in most competitions so people can instantly see who is the best. The Eurovision Song Contest uses a leaderboard to instantly reflect competing countries scores, changing their positions on the board as each vote comes in.

A variant of the indirect competition format is to play in a tournament setting. For this, a certain number of people start playing the same game for a limited amount of time, and the players then get points on who plays the best. For example, if you have four people that start playing a multiple choice game, that game could have a five minute time limit. The time limit is to make sure that all players finish within a certain amount of time so that the overall competition can be decided.

After everyone has finished, the person with the most points would be in first place, the person with the next highest score would be in second place, and so on. This is more direct than competing with everyone else in points without actually playing against another person.

Naturally, the direct way of competing involves two people directly playing



A real world chess board. Even this could be used in teaching languages

matches, until they find them all. In a direct version, the people would take turns turning over the pairs of cards. This makes the game more interesting as well as difficult, because any mistake you make may be used by your opponent, and you can also use his mistakes. The one who gets the most matches at the end is the winner.

Now it might seem, then, that both people

using German and Arabic.

Even more complex games could be introduced with this idea. The board game *Battleship* involves hidden game boards on which each player has placed “ships” of varying length. The players then take turns guessing at the position of the other person’s ships, being told each time if it was a “hit” or “miss”. Each player keeps track of their guesses, and the first player to sink all of the other’s ships is the winner.

Now, that has nothing to do with languages, obviously, so how can that kind of game be used? Well, what you can do is require each player to answer a correct multiple choice question for the languages they are learning in order to complete a hit, or indeed, for every move.

That means that not only do they have to be lucky at guessing positions, but they also need to



Kids getting excited about winning against an opponent

be good at their new language. And since each player is using their own interface, they can be doing completely different languages and vocabulary categories.

Using the method of requiring a player to answer a language question before taking a move could be applied to almost every game, even chess!

## Choose Your Own Adventure

Up to this point, the games have been essentially drills, and while these are useful, they can't really advance a person in a language beyond a certain point. Another method has to be used, and that involves reading.

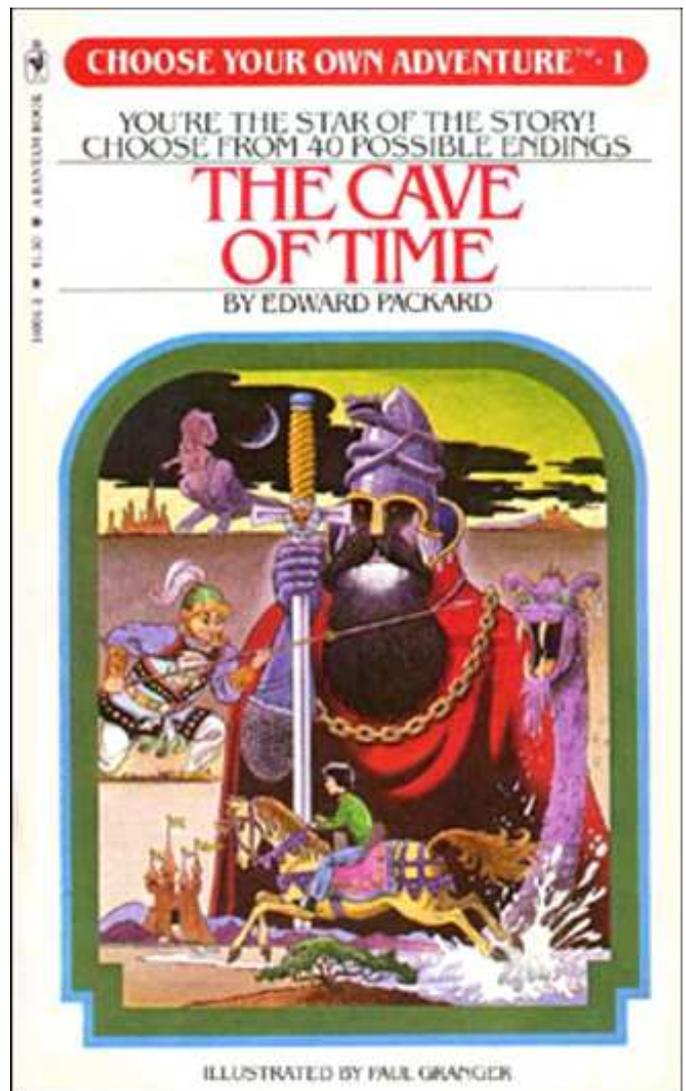
Back in the late 1980's and early 1990's, there was a popular series of books called "Choose Your Own Adventure". As the title suggests, the reader was part of the story and they had to make decisions which affected how the story went.

The flow was surprisingly simple: a person reads a few paragraphs which describe what is going on. After that, they are given a few choices as to what they want to do, and each choice tells them what page to turn to in order to continue. Once they turn to the right page, they are given more of the story to read and more choices.

This kind of game emphasizes the person's ability to read and it can easily be done with a computer. The reading itself could be enhanced by offering complete or partial translations of the text, so that both beginner and advanced readers could use the system.

The problem with this setup is in the amount of design involved in creating the stories. Most people have a difficult time writing a single story of any length, and this requires multiple variants of the same story. Even if a person does write all the variants and paths, in order for many people to use it, every part has to be translated into other languages.

That amount of preparation is why, despite this being such an interesting and fun idea, few places actually take the time to build it. Such a creation would involve a lot of good writers and translators.



Choose Your Own Adventure book, representing a more complex gamification method

## We Are On a Mission

While the multiple choice adventure game is difficult to implement, there is an even more complicated system to build, and thus it remains a sort of "Holy Grail" in the language learning world. That is the fully interactive "quest", which allows players to explore a world, interacting with other characters, either artificial or real players, while practising their reading and vocabulary skills.

There are actually two possible forms this layout could take. The first is all text. Similar to the early computer adventure games like Zork, a player would be told what they see, and they can then type in commands for what they want to do. This is far more complex than the *Choose Your Own Adventure* method, because while that one gives you limited choices, this

approach needs to be able to interpret what you tell it and react to it.

Normally, this could involve puzzles to solve, often requiring you to perform certain tasks or finding specific items before something else can be done. This kind of interaction is difficult at the most basic level, because the computer would have to be able to properly understand the input from a person who is just learning a language. For a human, this is a rather simple daily function, but for a computer which has no real understanding, it is very complex.

The other version involves a video game like interface, allowing a person to move around in a two or three dimensional world using keys or a mouse, rather than typing commands. Along the way, they could encounter other

people and items and perform simple tasks, like picking up an object or speaking to a person.

For this case, speaking to a pretend person is normally done using a simple reply to the characters text. For example, one character might ask in Italian how they are doing, and the player could choose from a few different possible answers, to which the character is programmed to handle. This is more like the *Choose Your Own Adventure*, but since you have more control over where you go and what you choose, the game play is much more versatile.

As you can see, this final method is very close to a full immersion game, but requires the greatest amount of time and effort create. An entire playing area has to be mapped out and put into an interactive system, while all the char-

acters have to be programmed with what to say and how to react.

I have seen a few people trying to put such a gaming system into place, usually asking for a few thousand dollars in donations to make it work, but I haven't yet seen a working game.

### Conclusion

Gamification is a serious business. Applying gamification to something as complex as language learning is particularly difficult, and each method has its drawbacks and limitations. Even though I wrote a good amount of detail on each, there are far more issues involved with all of them, as well as variations.

I would like to hear your own experiences with language learning gamification, as well as any of the methods you've seen that I didn't list. Play on! **PT**



A 3D world which allows members to go on quests.  
Another example of mixing games and learning

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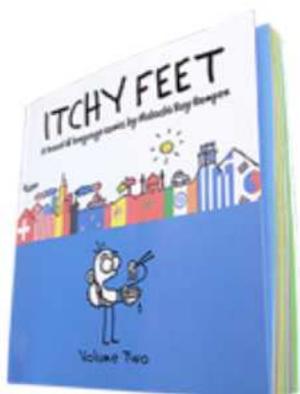
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One out of every six Americans is Hispanic. Professionals in the workforce need to know how to interact positively with this rapidly growing population.

Traditionally, law enforcement departments, hospitals, school districts and organizations have offered Spanish training to their employees in the form of a 2 to 5 day seminar, providing only 16 - 20 hours of classroom-style language training which has proven to be ineffective. No one can learn a new language in days. While the training might be top-notch and feedback might be great, if people can't apply what they learn on the job, then the training will not stick and will ultimately fail to produce long-lasting results.

The method organizations use today to train needs to be revisited, since ever tightening budgets are forcing organizations to flush many valuable programs ‘down the commode.’ Ten years ago e-training was a novelty, but today e-training is becoming the norm as organizations experience greater ‘bang’ for each buck invested.

Learning online is a very effective method of studying Spanish. Online training gives the learner access to practice and repetition (the keys to success in learning a new language) anytime, 24/7. Instead of a one-shot seminar, the flexibility and lower costs of online learning are ideal to implement at any type of organization.

Spanish e-training pays off big for organizations. First, the scheduling and implementing is less time-consuming than planning and running day seminars. Second, the training

takes place in the convenience of the employee’s space, eliminating travel expenses and other expenses associated with seminars. Third, online training can hold employees more accountable than a traditional seminar because attendance, assessment scores, activities, course completions, and participant progress can be monitored and immediately reported through learning management systems. Most importantly, online training allows organizations to provide a dependable, consistent and high quality training experience for every employee.

When selecting a Spanish training program, organizations need to consider a few core components including the cost, program content, program restrictions and requirements. There are additional concerns to consider when evaluating an e-training program. These other considerations include the method of teaching, the availability of teachers for live support, and how the online platform engages the learner.



In my 25 years of teaching Spanish, I have found the most effective method of studying and learning a new language is by using the *spacing effect*, also referred to as “drip approach” method. Imagine a dripping faucet, where each drop will collect to form a puddle that keeps expanding. Similarly, this method focuses on learning the language in small increments. Think of each word as a drop, phrases and sentences as small puddles which becomes a large pool of Spanish knowledge providing success with language learning.

**I recommend [MySpanishTeacher.com](http://MySpanishTeacher.com) (MST)** for using the drip approach plus concentrating on meeting the needs of the 3 different individual learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic learner). MST also focuses on culture awareness to help the learner completely understand the conversation with a Spanish speaker. Spoken language is only 7% to 35% of communication. Even though we use words, it turns out we convey most of the meaning via non-verbal methods. Very few online Spanish programs stress the importance of cross cultural competence and non-verbal communication, but this program understands the importance of more than words. As you review different programs, ask questions that should address your concerns in implementing the appropriate Spanish program within your organization.

### **Here are 10 sample questions you could ask when evaluating an online Spanish training program:**

- What learning approach is used in the online program?
- What styles of learners does it address?
- Does the program offer individual and group accounts?
- What is the cost per seat?
- Is there a way an administrator could monitor the training?
- How long does the employee have to view all material and complete the training? (Many programs lock you out once the lesson is complete.)
- Is there a contractual agreement to sign?
- Does it provide live teacher support? If not,



how can a student ask questions about the training?

- Is the program available on a mobile device?
- How does a student review his/her progress?

In my opinion, one last component the e-training must have to be successful are games and activities to make the learning experience fun and educational.

When employees are engaged in their learning, they take greater ownership. Most of us agree that games are a great way to engage in learning and improve retention. It takes time to become confident in a language, games make the learning process fun, interactive and rewarding. Besides engaging, their knowledge increases, performance improves as well as their confidence to communicate in Spanish.

It is estimated the Hispanic community will increase by 24 percent by 2050 in the United States. Employers including Spanish training in the annual training budget will with no doubt see top-line growth. **PT**

*Kendal Knetemann is a cross cultural communication consultant, a language blogger and Spanish instructor. You can read more about her at [LingoHut](http://LingoHut) where you'll find free language lessons, activities and articles on how to make language learning easier, or visit [LingoHut's Facebook page](https://www.facebook.com/LingoHut).*



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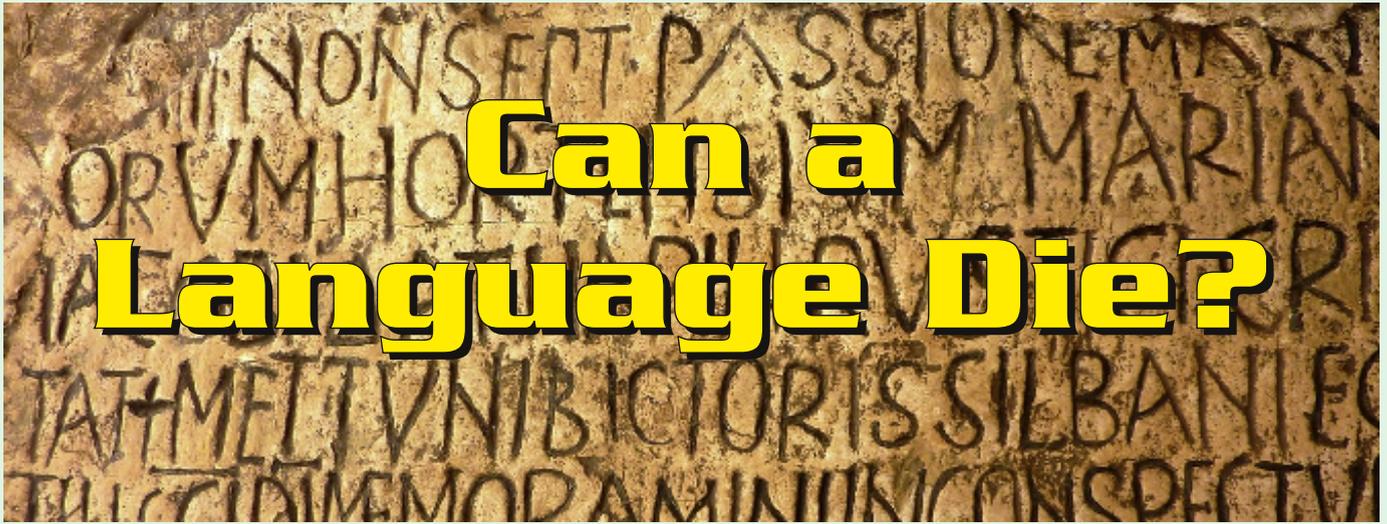
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Many people involved with languages are concerned about endangered languages. When too few people speak a language natively, that language is at risk of becoming extinct. Once the last speaker of it dies, there is no one left to speak it, and so it no longer exists.

The reasons that languages become endangered is usually due to oppression and domination of the people who speak it, or it may fall into disuse when another, more popular language draws people away from it. Why learn or continue speaking a less used language when everyone else around you is speaking another?

There are numerous projects that exist in various forms which attempt to save these languages. Most of them involve attempts to record all the information about a language that can be gathered, such as the Rosetta Project. Others involve linguists travelling to remote parts of the world and working with the last of the native speakers to map out the language and, when possible, obtain recordings of it.

But while people will often debate what is to be done about dying languages, how to revive them, or even if we should, we never seem to ask “Can a language actually die?”

Despite the way we like to think of a language as a living organism that can grow, evolve, and in some ways, even reproduce (in the forms of dialects and pidgins), it is really people that are making those things happen, and not the language itself. A language is a set of rules about grammar, syntax, morphology, etc., combined with a vocabulary. When no one is speaking it, all of that still remains, in the same way that when someone isn't using a dish, the dish still exists; it doesn't just vanish in a puff of air.

So why can't a language be brought back to life after it has “died”. We can take that dish and use it again, and it still performs its function. If people start actively using a language again, doesn't that make it living?

It seems to me very odd that we tend to view a language as “dead”, even while it is being used and taught. I took classes in Latin during my years in High School, and we read stories in it, sang in it, even played games using it. It has literature and a culture, and we have the rules and the vocabulary. The proper pronunciation might be somewhat debated, since no one living has ever heard it pronounced by a native speaker, but that shouldn't be enough to make it unusable.

And indeed, it is still in use. The Vatican uses it in certain situations, people use it during Catholic Mass, and it provides the basis for many of our modern medical, biological and legal terms.

So why is it called a “dead language”. Is it like some zombie, in which a person has died but has just refused to stop moving? Is it a strange kind of



This book is written in Latin. How can it be dead if people still use it?

“undead” language? What constitutes life for a language, if not it being used?

I suppose the argument could be made that it needs enough people speaking it as their native language to be truly “alive”, but then what does that say about auxiliary languages and pidgins? Neither of those have a huge amount of native speakers. A pidgin language requires a certain number of those before it can become a creole. Yet no one talks about those or an auxiliary like Esperanto being endangered or dead.

How about constructed languages in general? A conlang rarely has more than a few people using it, yet we don’t talk about them being endangered. We still define them as languages, even though no one ever speaks them as their native tongue.

So perhaps the question should be “What makes a language alive?”. If that can be properly defined, then why can’t it be used to bring back these preserved “extinct” language back into existence? What good

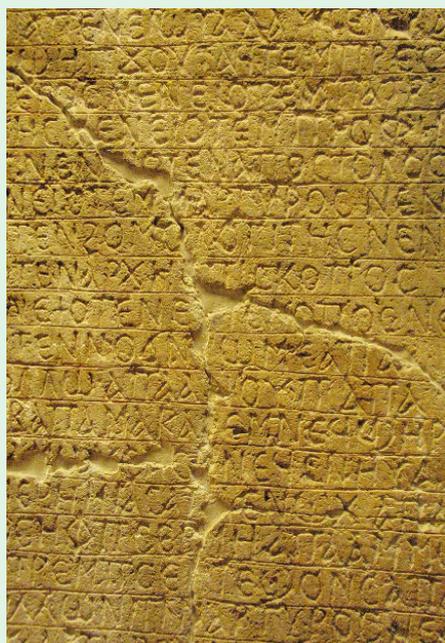


Is a language which is no long spoken dead, or just frozen, like this statue?

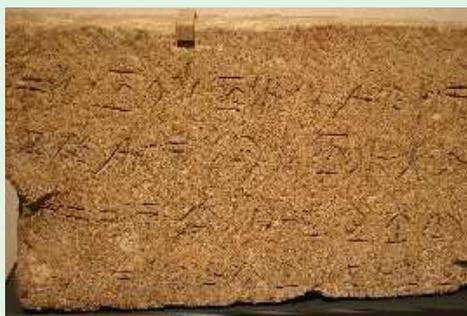
is preserving them if we never actually use them? That’s like breaking a dish then carefully wrapping up all the pieces and placing it a cupboard, never to be used again.

Whether a language should be saved or brought back, if that is possible, is a matter of debate. I want to know what stops us from doing so? Why must what I learned in my Latin classes forever be dismissed as dead?

Then, we can start discussing the making of the linguistical horror film, “Night of the Undead Languages”! **PT**



These languages are no longer actively used, but could they be reborn if people started using them again? Coptic (left), Syriac (right), Eteocypriot (below)





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# At the Cinema

## La Casa del Fin de los Tiempos



**La Casa del Fin de los Tiempos**  
101 min  
Drama / Horror / Mystery  
21 June 2013 (Venezuela)

Country: Venezuela  
Language: Spanish

*All this leads up to an astounding twist which brings past and present together in a unique way which is what makes this such an amazing film and one I really love.*

I don't normally watch horror films, mainly because most of the time I find them to be overtly gory and violent while having no real plot. They are attempting to simply gross out the audience or scare them with lots of sudden bangs and movements.

The first Venezuelan horror film, "La Casa del Fin de los Tiempos" (The House at the End of Time) is not your normal horror story, however. It starts out with the gruesome part of the story, then changes to a thriller and mystery which will explain the opening events.

We first see the main character of the movie, Dulce, as she is lying unconscious on the floor of a house. She is bloodied by a large cut down her cheek and surrounded by broken glass. She awakens, slowly realizes where she is, then begins to search the house, growing more frantic as she calls out for Leopoldo, her son.

As she descends staircases further down into the house, she stumbles across the body of her husband, Juan José. He has been stabbed in the neck by a large kitchen knife. Dulce continues further into the lower reaches of the house until she sees her son standing in a doorway. Fearful for his safety, she calls to him to come to her. He seems terrified, but finally takes a step towards her. To Dulce's horror, he is suddenly grabbed back into the darkness,

the door slamming shut after him.

Dulce screams, opens the door, and descends yet another flight of stairs into what appears to be an underground chamber, but there is no sign of her son. She failed to save him, but save him from what?

Next we see Dulce being led out of the house by the police, as she has been accused of the murder of both her husband and son. Found guilty, as there are no other suspects and her fingerprints were found on the murder weapon, she is put in jail.

We jump forward thirty years to 2011, when Dulce, now a grey-haired elderly woman, is being released from jail due to her health and put under house arrest in the very house where the murders were carried out. As she enters, we see a flashback to her in a kitchen as two young boys come in. One is Leopoldo and the other is his younger brother, Rodrigo. This begins a series of flashbacks which continue throughout the film, showing present events as well as the past leading up to the crime.

A priest soon comes to visit



Dulce searching for her son in the house

her, wanting to hear from her what really happened. Dulce dismisses him, telling him she has given up on God, but she takes him to the lowest part of the house where she saw Leopoldo vanish. She tells him the house killed her husband and took away her son.

Another flashback shows the boys riding their bikes to meet up with other neighbourhood kids and have a fun day throwing urine filled balloons at adults and playing baseball in a small lot. We learn that while life for them outside the house is happy and exciting, life in the house is draining and hard for everyone. The children are scared of something in the house, and while Dulce consoles them, she has her own darkness to contend with.

When Juan Jose comes home, we learn that the couple has grown apart. Juan is unable to provide for his family and Dulce has come to resent him. After some bitter words, Juan heads back out into the night, leaving Dulce in her bedroom.

After he leaves, the door handle to the bedroom starts rattling, as if someone is trying to get into the locked room. Dulce thinks it is Juan and shouts at him to go away, but the rattling gets more intense. Meanwhile, we see someone is also trying to get into Rodrigo's room. Somehow, both doors become unlocked and open. Using the child logic of protection, Rodrigo yanks a bed sheet over himself as a small figure enters the room and approaches him.

Meanwhile, Dulce's door has a chain lock to prevent the door from opening more than a few inches. As Dulce approaches to see who is there, an arm thrusts in slams her against the door as it attempts to undo the latch. Dulce screams and manages to get the door



Leopoldo and Rodrigo facing off in sibling rivalry

shut again, after which there is silence for a moment. Then she hears a scream as Rodrigo has the sheet yanked off him by the intruder.

After some frantic running around trying to find the proper keys, Dulce manages to find both her children, safe, but apparently shaken up by something. She can find no sign of an intruder. The police come the next day to investigate, but there is little she can tell them. Leopoldo has seen something, and finally tells Dulce that he saw a woman who told him not to play with Rodrigo and she gave him a note to give to Dulce which says that Juan will try to kill her son.

All this is revealed in the flashback, and the priest decides to do some of his own research on the case. He soon finds other stories about similar events which happened in the house, with people disappearing in 1951 as well as the original occupants in 1921.

Present day Dulce knows there is something evil in the house, as she sees an old man holding a knife a few times, but each time he disappears quickly for others to see him. She also finds five pairs of ones written on a mirror in what appears to be blood.

Through more flashbacks, we see Dulce



Dulce in the kitchen as her sons quickly eat breakfast



Dulce and Jean, trying to make sense of their lives



Dulce being attacked in her bedroom by an unknown intruder



Dulce consulting a medium to figure out what is happening in her house

tell Juan that she is leaving him and taking the children after she shows the note to him. He threatens her so she stays, but she seeks out a medium to find out what is going on with the house. Contact is made with something, and she hears a conversation between two people, one claiming not to be the other's father with the other pleading not to kill him. She sees the old man that our present day Dulce has seen and accuses the medium and her aide as trying to scare her.

Then tragedy strikes when during one of the baseball games, Rodrigo takes a direct hit to the head from a ball Leopoldo hits, which kills him instantly.

In the present, the priest has finally figured out what the numbers mean. They are dates and time - November 11, 11:11:11 - that very day. He returns immediately to the house to tell Dulce only to find her preparing to commit suicide. He stops her and tells her that she just needs to get through this night, and everything will be fine, but he isn't allowed to stay longer because she is still technically a prisoner and it is not a "visiting day".

In the past, while the family mourns Rodrigo's death, Juan goes through Dulce's stuff and finds an old letter hidden at the bot-

tom of a drawer. It is from another man, revealing that Leopoldo is not Juan's son and encouraging Dulce to marry Juan. Enraged at this revelation, broken by Dulce's resentment, and grief over the death of his only true son, Juan snaps and goes after Leopoldo to kill him.

All this leads up to an astounding twist which brings past and present together in a unique way which is what makes this such an amazing film and one I really love. The movie is never boring, which is a huge credit to the both the director and the actors, even when the action itself seems slow, as your brain is always trying to solve what is really going on. When you do begin to see it all as a whole, your brain will thank you for giving it such a wonderful puzzle to solve.

Coming from Venezuela, the film is obviously in Spanish, and there really isn't any other language or cultural aspect to it which would make it appealing to a language learner, I confess. But, if you are looking for an intelligent thriller with a superb ending to watch while practising your Spanish (or even if you aren't), this is a definite must see film!

**PT**



Old Dulce showing the priest where she lost her son



The priest meeting old Dulce after she returns to the house



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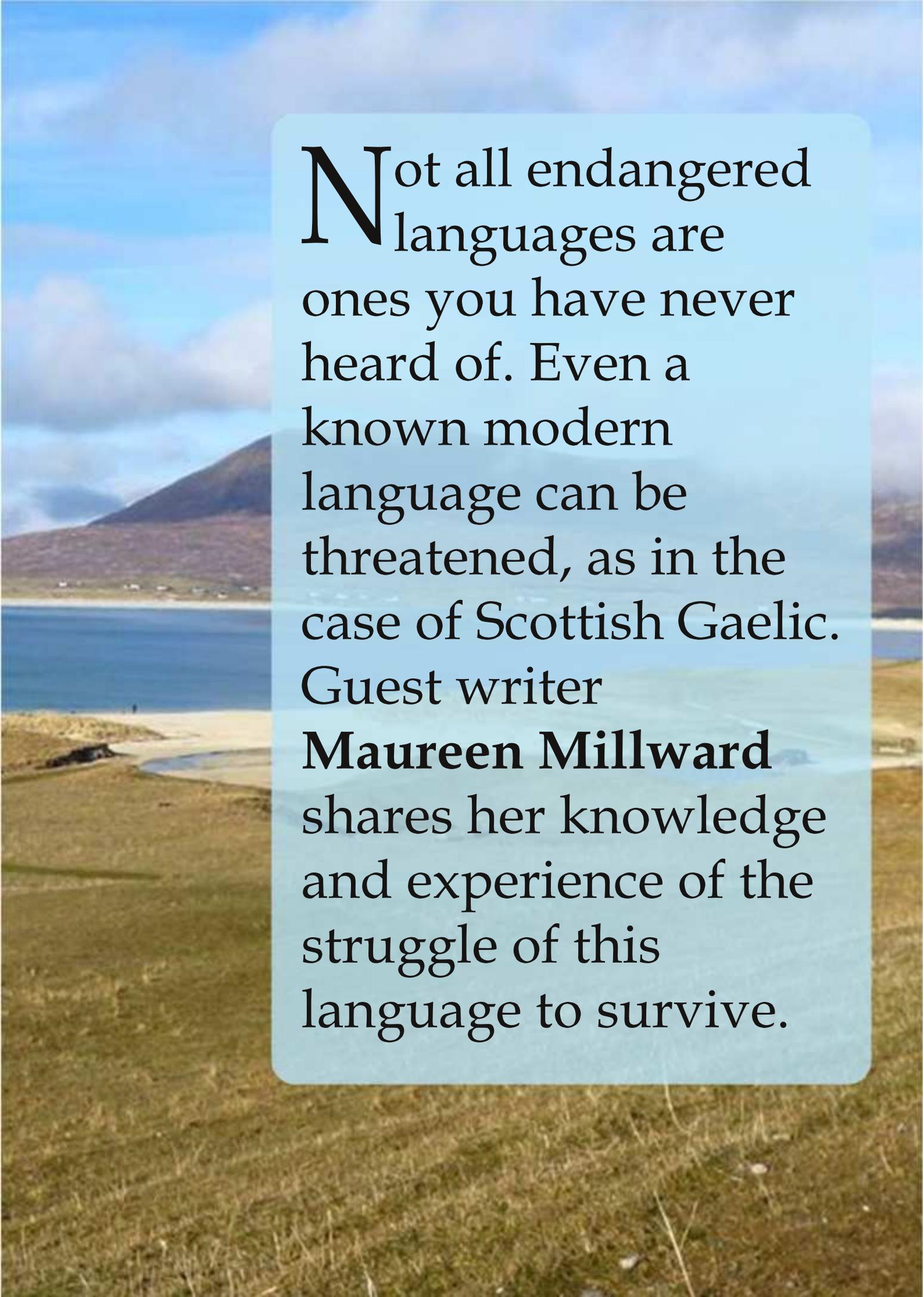
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Languages in Peril

# Scottish Gaelic

by Maureen F Millward



**N**ot all endangered languages are ones you have never heard of. Even a known modern language can be threatened, as in the case of Scottish Gaelic. Guest writer **Maureen Millward** shares her knowledge and experience of the struggle of this language to survive.

Throughout the last twenty years or so that I have spent learning languages, the languages I chose to learn were always for work or travel purposes. This changed last year when I decided to focus on something different. I had always wanted to learn Scottish Gaelic, the language of my ancestors, but I had never had the time due to other commitments. Once I decided to make the time for it, there was no going back. My great-grandfather taught Gaelic to adults in Glasgow but the language was never passed down any further within the family. This is a typical story within Gaelic speaking families over the last century.

The number of Gaelic speakers in Scotland today is estimated to be around 60,000 people. However, nobody is certain how many of those are native speakers. The language is currently still spoken mainly in the Western Isles with the Isles of Lewis and Harris having the highest percentage of Gaelic speakers per head of population. There are now very few places in mainland Scotland where Gaelic is commonly heard.

The Gaelic language is a Celtic language and is believed to have been brought to Scotland from Irish settlers around the 4th century. The two languages are still very similar today. By the 10th century, Gaelic was the dominant language in north and west Scotland.

The decline of the Gaelic language started around the 19th century when there were around 300,000 Gaelic speakers in the year 1800. By 1931, there were just



A sign giving directions in both Scottish Gaelic and English

130,000 speakers left. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, there were some major factors which caused the decline of the Gaelic language. Firstly in 1707, there was the Act of Union with England. In the

*Despite the lack of native speakers and plentiful resources that exist with the more mainstream languages, Gaelic is still possible to learn to a decent level.*

1870s, Gaelic was banned in schools and teachers had to enforce English within the classroom. The 19th century was a sad period for the Gaelic people in history. Many of the Gaelic-speaking population were tenant farmers and during this period, many land owners evicted their tenants in favour of populating their land with sheep. This caused many of the Gaelic speakers to leave Scotland altogether

and seek new opportunities. Some were promised land to farm on in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These people took their language with them and most never returned to Scotland. Faced with having to learn English in their new country, many thought it unnecessary to pass on the Gaelic language to their children and it eventually died out in many families. A small number managed to keep the language alive and as a result there are still around 1,000 Gaelic speakers in Nova Scotia, Canada.

In recent years, the Scottish government has tried to implement some measures to reverse the sharp decline in Gaelic speakers. Gaelic was re-introduced into schools in recent years and the first Gaelic medium high school where all subjects are taught in Gaelic was opened in Glasgow in 2006. More recently, another Gaelic medium high school was opened

in Edinburgh. There are several Gaelic medium primary schools, particularly in the Western Isles and some young children now join these schools before they start to learn English. Classes for parents are encouraged so that they can support their children in learning Gaelic and there are now many adult classes within the communities throughout Scotland.

Seeing as I now live outside Scotland, my only option for regular tuition in Gaelic was to take up a distance learning course through a college on the Isle of Skye. The course consisted of one weekly telephone tutorial in a group and then an exam at the end of term. I did well in my first level exam and for the second level, I am planning to attend a week-long intensive course at the college in Skye. To enhance my Gaelic learning experience, I took a trip to the Isles of Lewis and Harris earlier this year. I arrived in Stornoway and heard Gaelic being spoken in the first shop I went into. I took the opportunity to practise with the shop owner and the following day, I drove into the more remote parts of the islands where Gaelic is still quite widely spoken. I was lucky enough to stop at Ravenspoint Cafe (who also run Gaelic courses) and practise some Gaelic there and then I went to the village of Gravir and attended a church



Maureen Millward on the Isle of Lewis, the largest island of the Western Isles of Scotland

service all in Gaelic including the unique and traditional singing of the Gaelic Psalms. This was a truly worthy experience of Gaelic culture and after the church service, the friendly locals were all happy to speak in Gaelic to me.

Despite the lack of native speakers and plentiful resources that exist with the more mainstream languages, Gaelic is still possible to learn to a decent level. It's just a case of searching for the right resources to help you. There are children's books, DVDs teaching Gaelic, language

courses, an online dictionary, useful websites, a television channel (BBC Alba) and even fiction by well-known Scottish authors such as Ian Rankin has been translated into Gaelic. Despite the challenges, I have thoroughly enjoyed my Gaelic learning experience so far and it has opened up cultural aspects of my home country which I never knew existed before I began my Gaelic journey. **PT**

*Maureen Millward is a Polyglot and Accountant from Scotland. As well as English, her native language, she is fluent in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese and also speaks Norwegian, French, Gaelic and Arabic at various levels. She is currently learning Greek and German. As well as languages, she has a passion for travel & photography which she talks about on her blog Mo's Language Learning Journey <https://languagelearningjourney.wordpress.com/>*

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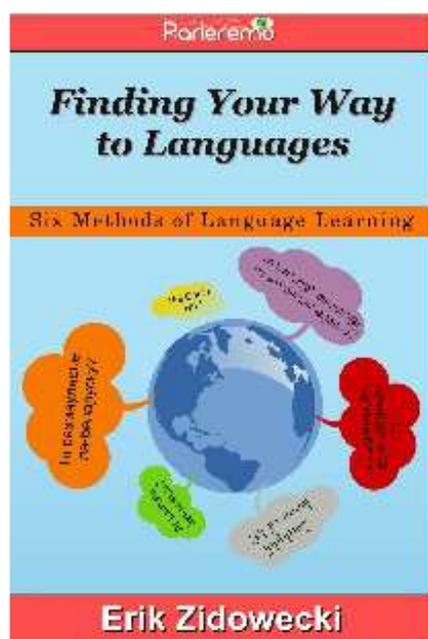
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Apples growing in an orchard. The trees are so young and frail, they are supported by wooden stakes

# Words in Your Mouth

# Apple

**W**e take a bite out of a juicy topic this month: apple.

Few fruits are as universally recognized as the apple. These handy fruits can be eaten directly from the tree, cooked along with meat for extra seasoning, or mashed into a sweet “sauce” for dessert. The juice is very sweet, and is imbibed in its normal state, or, when mixed with the pulp of the fruit, as *cider*. The apple even plays a role in mythology, from the “knowledge fruit” of the Biblical Garden of Eden to the Apple of Discord, which started the Trojan War. There is even a computer company that took the name “Apple” to represent them, and mentioning it to some computer users may be creating your own discord.

Apples, the fruit kind, vary widely in size, shape, colour, and acidity. Most are round and some shade of red or yellow. The largest producers of apples are the U.S.,

China, France, Italy, and Turkey. Apples provide vitamins A and C, carbohydrates, and fibre.

All of the European languages, except the Romance languages, (meaning most of the Indo-European languages, including the Celtic languages) use a word with a root of “ap”, “ab”, “af”, “ep”, or “av” for apples and apple trees. That can be seen in the English (*apple*), Old English

(*æppel*), Celtic (*aballo*), Irish Gaelic (*abhal*), Welsh (*afal*), Icelandic (*epli*), Russian (*яблоко* - *jabloko*), and Polish (*jablko*). This comes from the Proto Indo-European “ab(e)l”, with the changes being made in the various languages due to pronunciation standards. Originally, this term applied to all fruits, which might help explain why the apple was the biblical “fruit of knowledge”. It wasn’t because the



Person pouring apple slices into a tray to make a pie



Apple strudel for breakfast

apple was anything specific, but rather the word was used to represent any fruit.

Before Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire (4th century AD), the Latin “malum” meant “apple”. Once Christianity took over, because of its symbolic importance in the Bible, the term “pomum”, meaning “fruit” was used to refer to the apple as the “fruit of fruits”. From this “pomum”, we get the French (*pomme*), Catalan (*poma*), and Walloon (*peme*).

The Italian word “mela” comes from the Latin “mila”, which is the plural of “milum”, and this replaces the Classical Latin “malum”. “Malum” could come “mala matiana”. The “matiana” would be from the adjective *matianus*, referring to Caius Matius, who was an important author of agricultural treatises.

There is also speculation that the “Matius” comes from another of Caesar’s friends,

who had written a cookbook. It could also come from the adjective *matianus*, referring to the Germanic city of Mattium. Thus, “mala matiana” would be *Matius’ apple*, or *Mattium apple*. “Malum” is also the source for the Romanian (*măr*), the Spanish (*manzana*), and the Portuguese (*maçã*).

Following these, we can see the Quechua “mansana” is taken from the Spanish, and the Guarani “masã” is either borrowed from the Portuguese, or taken from the Spanish and simplified. Tetum “masán” and Tagalog “mansanas” are probably borrowed from Portuguese.

The Greek “μήλο” [milo] comes straight from Classical Greek “μήλον” (μήλον) [melon], “an apple” or, generally, “any tree-fruit”. This may also be another source of the Latin “mila”, and this shows just how much etymologies are largely speculative. We can observe patterns, but not be sure what influenced what.

One such observation is that Faroese for apple is “súrepli” and potato is “epli”, which would seem to contradict the earlier statement about the “ep” root. The prefix “súr-” comes from the adjective “súrur”, meaning “sour”. This may once again be related to “epli” having a larger meaning, but being re-



Bins of apples on sale at a market

duced later to refer to a single fruit. In this case, it was affixed to potato, and the “súr-” was used to differentiate the apple.

Further evidence of this can be seen when looking at the names of some other foods in other languages. A reference to “apple” is often hidden in other names. In old English, the word for “cucumbers” was “eorþæppla” (earth-apples). In French, we find “pomme de terre” (earth-apple) referring to “potato”. In English, there is “pineapple”, which is a reference to the way the fruit resembles the cones of pine trees.

There are even more examples of this. Chinese 苹果 / 蘋果 is composed of “apple” and “fruit”. Korean 沙果 is composed of “sand (-like), granulated” and “fruit”. Japanese りんご [ringo] can be written as 林檎, but that’s rarely done in modern Japanese. That is a composition of “forest” and the name of a small type of apple. It seems that 林檎 in Chinese can mean “wedding gift”. Vietnamese is “quả táo”, which seems to follow the same model of the Chinese variants and the Korean word (just reversed, following Vietnamese grammar):

quả : fruit (old, “fruit”)  
táo: apple (possibly old, “jujube”, “Chinese date”)

Sámi has both “ebel” and “eappel”. The first seems to be from Baltic, the second from Germanic. Since both Baltic and Germanic take their roots from the same source, this might show how words get altered over time. It



Chocolate covered apples on sticks. Yum!

would appear both versions of the word remain active in Sámi.

### Idioms

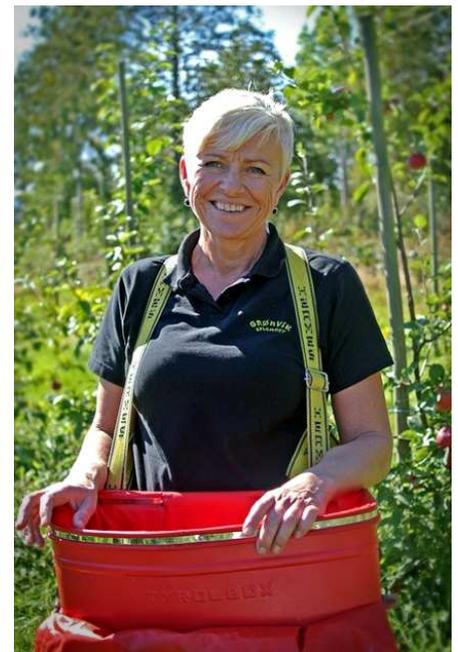
There are a few idioms in English that involve apples. “In apple-pie order” means “neat and tidy”. The term “apple-pie” itself is often used to refer to the “goodness” of America, as in “as American as apple-pie”. The “apple of one’s eye” refers to a person or item that is held in the highest regard. When you compare two things incorrectly, you are “comparing apples to oranges”.

British slang has the cockney rhyming schemes to refer to things, and one is “apples and pears” meaning “stairs”. When one “upsets the apple cart”, it means carefully made plans are disrupted. Perhaps the most commonly heard usage, however, is “the Big Apple”, referring to New York.

### Conclusion

However you slice them, apples are delicious and

healthy, as well as interesting from a linguistic point of view. An English idiom promotes them with “An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” so munch on them as often as you can, and think about how if it wasn’t for apples, Sir Isaac Newton would never have discovered gravity, and how fruitless our world would be without that! **PT**



Apple farmer in Norway

### Other pictures related to apple

**From top left, clockwise:** Apple pastries; Basket of freshly picked apples; Bowl of applesauce; A slice of apple pie; Sliced apples on a plate with a banana; Apple cider on a hot summer day



**GERMANIC**

*Western*

<b>Afrikaans:</b>	appel
<b>Dutch:</b>	appel
<b>English:</b>	apple
<b>Frisian:</b>	appel / apel
<b>German:</b>	Apfel
<b>Low Saxon:</b>	Appel
<b>Luxembourgish:</b>	Apel
<b>Old English:</b>	æppel
<b>Old High German:</b>	aphul
<b>Old Saxon:</b>	appul
<b>Yiddish:</b>	אַפּל (epf)

*Northern*

<b>Dalecarlian:</b>	eppel
<b>Danish:</b>	æble
<b>Faroese:</b>	súrepli
<b>Gutnish:</b>	epli
<b>Icelandic:</b>	epli
<b>Jamtlandic:</b>	epli [Ep_h:@r`]
<b>Norwegian:</b>	eple (bokmål and nynorsk)
<b>Swedish:</b>	äpple

*Eastern*

**Crimean Gothic:**

apel

*Central*

**Central German dialects:**

Appel/Abbel

**SLAVIC**

*Western*

<b>Czech:</b>	jablko
<b>Polabian:</b>	jobkú
<b>Polish:</b>	jabłko
<b>Slovak:</b>	jablko

*Eastern*

<b>Russian:</b>	яблоко [jablaka]
<b>Ukrainian:</b>	яблуко [jabluko]

*Southern*

<b>Bulgarian:</b>	ябълка [jabǎlka]
<b>Croatian:</b>	jabuka
<b>Proto-slavonic:</b>	ableko
<b>Serbian:</b>	јабука [jabuka]
<b>Slovenian:</b>	jábolko

**ITALIC**

<b>Aragones:</b>	mazana
<b>Asturian:</b>	mazana
<b>Catalan:</b>	poma
<b>French:</b>	pomme
<b>Galician:</b>	mazá
<b>Italian:</b>	mela
<b>Ladino:</b>	pom
<b>Latin:</b>	malum / pomum / abella
<b>Neopolitan:</b>	méla
<b>Portuguese:</b>	maçã
<b>Romanian:</b>	măr
<b>Spanish:</b>	manzana
<b>Walloon:</b>	peme

**ITALIAN DIALECTS**

<b>Bergamasco:</b>	póm
<b>Bolognese:</b>	maila
<b>Bresciano:</b>	póm
<b>Calabrese:</b>	puma / mela / pumu
<b>Leonese:</b>	manzana
<b>Lombardo</b>	
<b>Occidentale:</b>	pòmm
<b>Mantuan:</b>	pom
<b>Parmigiano:</b>	pom
<b>Reggiano:</b>	pòm
<b>Romagnolo:</b>	mèila
<b>Sardinian:</b>	mela
<b>Sicilian:</b>	puma
<b>Triestino:</b>	pomo
<b>Valencian:</b>	poma
<b>Venetian:</b>	pomo
<b>Viestano:</b>	mel'
<b>Zeneize:</b>	meia

**CELTIC**

*Goidelic*

<b>Ancient Irish:</b>	ubull
<b>Gaulish:</b>	avallo
<b>Irish:</b>	úll
<b>Scots-Gaelic:</b>	ubhal

*Brythonic*

<b>Welsh:</b>	afal
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## ALBANIAN

Albanian: mollë

## GREEK

Greek: μήλο

## ALTAIC

Korean: 사과 (沙果) [sagwa]

## INDEPENDENT

Basque: sagar  
Japanese: りんご [ringo]

## FINNO-UGRIC

Estonian: õun  
Finnish: omena  
Hungarian: alma  
Izhorian/Ingrian: ommeena  
Livonian: umar  
Sámi (North): ebel / eappel  
Votic: õuna

## URALIC-MORDVIN

Erzya: umař

## MALAYO-POLYNESIAN

Bahasa Indonesian: apel  
Bahasa Melayu: epal  
Hawai'ian: āpala  
Malagasy: pôma  
Tetum: masán

## MĀORI - TAHITIC

Reo Māori (Aotearoa/New Zealand): āporo  
Reo Māori (The Cook Islands): `āpara

## MESO-PHILIPPINE

Tagalog: mansanas

## SEMITIC

Arabic: تفاح [tuffah]  
Hebrew: תפוח [tapua]  
Maltese: Tufieha

## SINO-TIBETAN

Chinese: 苹果 (蘋果) [píngguǒ]  
Cantonese: 蘋果 [ping4 gwo2]  
Taiwanese (Hokkien): 刮果 [gua\geo] / 槿果 [pong\geo]

## BALTIC

Lithuanian: obuolys  
Latvian: ābols, ābele  
Prussian: āblē

## KADAI

Thai: ลูกแอปเปิ้ล [luuk aeep bpeern]

## NIGER-KHORDOFANIAN

Swahili: tofaa / tufaha / tufaa

## ANDEAN-EQUATORIAL

Quechua: mansana

## TUPI

Guarani: guavirana'a ; masã

## ESKIMO-ALEUT

Kalaallisut: kimminaujaq  
Inuktitut: kimminaujaq

## AUSTRO-ASIATIC

Vietnamese: quả táo

## CONSTRUCTED

Canis: mælo  
Esperanto: pomo  
Allun: útti (úttíl~)

## OTHER

Mudnés: pàm

# LINDSAY DOES LANGUAGES

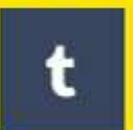
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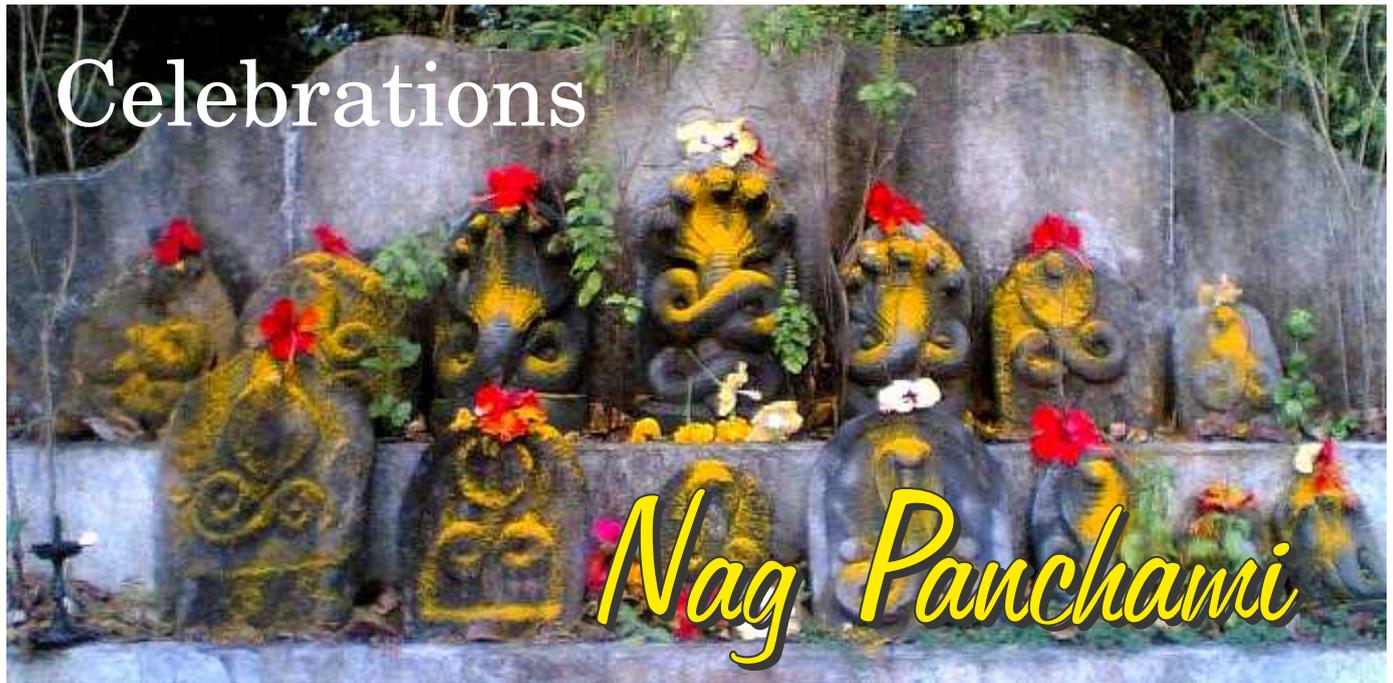
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On the fifth day of the Shravan, the Nag Panchami, or “Festival of Snakes” is celebrated all over India. This is usually in July or August, and this year it is on August 19th.

Snake worship evolved partially out of people's fear of the creatures, and thus praying to them not to hurt them, and also to their idea that serpents are immortal (due partially to their shedding of skin to be “reborn”).

### Legends

As many celebrations are based around legends, this one is also based around a few.

In the Mahabharata epic poem, Janamejeya, the son of King Parikshit of the Kuru dynasty, was performing a snake sacrifice known as *Sarpa Satra*, to avenge the death of his father, who had died from a snake bite. The snake who bit him was the king of snakes, Taksaka. The *Sarpa Satra* was to destroy all the snakes, called *nagas*, of the world in retribution.

A great sacrificial pit, or *Yagha kunda*, was built and when the sacrifice was performed, all the snakes of the world were drawn to it and destroyed. All, that is, except for Taksaka himself. He had fled to the nether world of Indra, Lord of Heaven, seeking protection. The sages performing the sacrifice learned of this and increased their chanting, eventually becoming so powerful as to begin dragging even Taksaka, along with Indra, to

the fire.

The gods became scared of this and asked Mansa Devi, goddess of snakes, to intervene, and so she sent her son, Astika, to request Janamejeya to stop. Astika explained to Janamejeya that his father had been killed by Taksaka because Janamejeya's ancestors had burned an entire forest, killing all the snakes except Taksaka, to clear space for a city. Janamejeya was impressed by Astika's knowledge and wisdom, and offered him a boon, or favour. Astika requested that the sacrifice be stopped, and so it was.

Taksaka was grateful to Astika for saving him, and so he also offered Astika a boon. For



A Statue of Naga being worshipped on Nag Panchami



A scene from Mahabharata, depicting the huge snake sacrifice by the king Janamejaya

that, Astika requested that the snakes should stop harming people and anyone who told this story would be immune from snake bites. And so the hostility between humans and nagas was ended.

Another story tells how the supreme deity Krishna, as a boy, fell into the river Yamuna and was confronted by the terrible snake Kaliya who lived there. Krishna jumped on the snake's head and caught it by its neck. Kaliya pleaded with Krishna not to kill him, and Krishna, showing mercy, let him go after Kaliya promised not to bother anyone again.

A third legend tells of how a farmer accidentally killed a nest of baby serpents while tilling his field. The mother serpent took revenge and killed the entire family, except for the daughter, who she found praying to the Nagas. This act of devotion restored the family to life. For this reason, plowing a field on this day is forbidden in some parts of India.

### History

There existed a clan called Nagas in ancient

India. During this pre-Aryan time, snake-worship was very popular. After the Aryan invasion of India (or migration - historians are unsure which), the snake-worshipping was adopted into Hinduism. The snake is also considered sacred in Buddhism and Jainism, where legends say that snakes played a significant role in protecting the lives of both Buddha and the Jain Muni Parshwanath.

### Celebration

On the Naga Panchami, several means of celebration are performed. Women draw figures of snakes on the walls of their houses using a special mixture of black powder, cow dung, and milk as a way to protect their family. Milk is also considered a vital offering, and it is left outside snake holes or actually poured directly in, as well as being taken to Devi temples. In some parts, snake temples are crowded and offerings are given to stone or metal icons of the cosmic serpents, Ananta and Sesa. Other places, a "snake" made of dough is created and buried. Snake charmers also travel from house to house carrying cobras in baskets, asking for alms. **PT**



Roadside snake charmer in Agra, India

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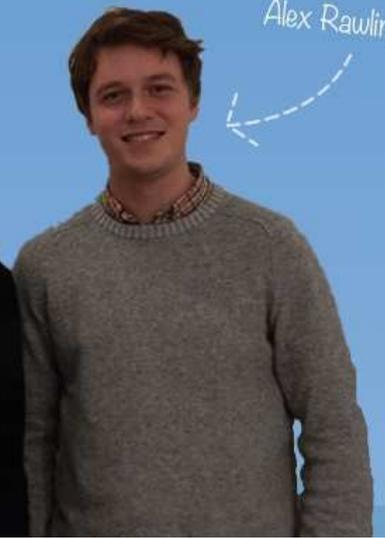
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# Where Are You?

This capital city is the economic, political, educational, and cultural center of its country. It sits in an ancient lake bed which is bordered on two sides by narrow river valleys. It is also part of the 40th most populous urban areas in the world.

Historically, the region was home to tribes of indigenous people called Ketagalan tribes before the eighteenth century. After that, settlers from another province moved in after the government of a dynasty gave them permission to develop the area. It was made the temporary capital for the province in 1886 and later made a formal provincial capital in 1896.

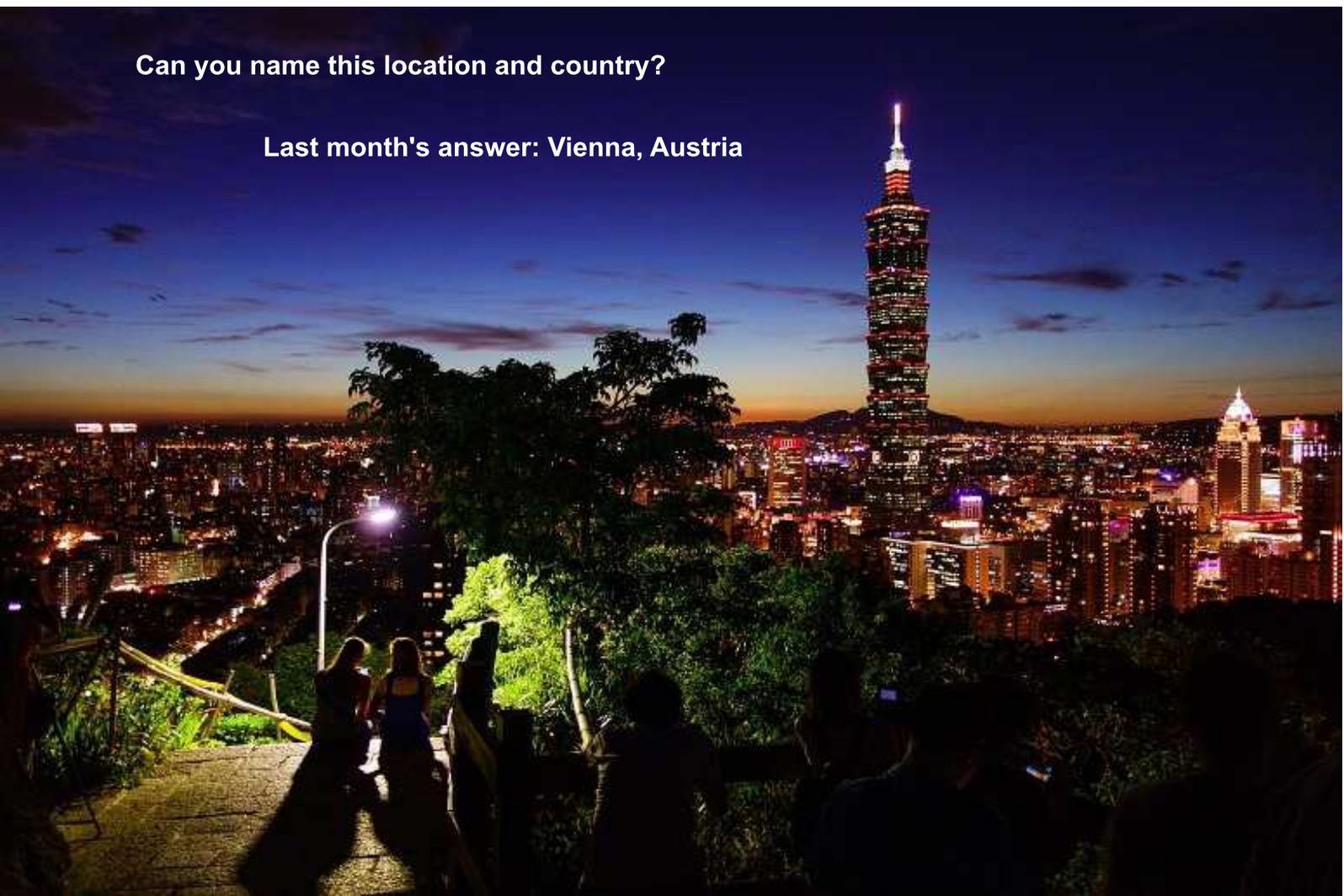
After the First Sino-Japanese War, the state was made a colony of Imperial Japan with this city as the capital. During that time, an extensive project was undertaken to build up the infrastructure, including railroads.

When the Republic of China took over in 1945 after the Japanese surrender of the Second World War, it went on to become its provisional capital. The city expanded greatly in the following decades and was declared in 1967 as a special centrally administered municipality. It was given the administrative status of a province and expanded even further, annexing several neighbouring cities, eventually bringing the population to over 1.5 million.

Today, it remains one of the world's most densely populated urban areas, and received over 6 million visitors a year, making it 15th most visited city in the world.

**Can you name this location and country?**

**Last month's answer: Vienna, Austria**



# Book Look

## Fluency Made Achievable: The Fluent Guide to Core Language Skills

by Kerstin Hammes

Language: English

Item Rating: ★★★★★

The book in review this month is *Fluency Made Achievable: A Simple Practice Plan for Training Core Language Skills* by Kerstin Hammes. It is available from Amazon in both paperback and Kindle formats, as well as part of a wonderful bundle package featuring this book, an audio copy of the book, another book of hers called *The Vocab Cookbook*, and action sheets to help put what she talks about to work for you.

Kerstin is a native German speaker who is well experienced in working with and teaching languages. Not only does she tutor in German, but she runs a very successful blog and podcast, all about achieving fluency in languages.

*Fluency Made Achievable* is a short book, with only around 70 pages in the printed format, but don't let the size fool you. This book is a powerhouse of great information for people learning a language for the first time or experienced learners who want to pick up some new ideas as well as refine their current study methods.

So let us begin right there, at the kind of content. *Fluency Made Achievable* is not going to waste your time by of spoon feeding you concepts and using cute attempts at trying to be your friend, which is what so many modern self-help books seem to do when they have no real message. Kerstin presents her material in a straight forward manner which is easy to understand while also being very useful.

This book is also not going to try to give you

“secret methods” or learning shortcuts which too often form the basis of many language learning aides. She isn't promising you fluency within a fixed time as long as you adhere to a magical formula she has developed. She does provide a three-week structure, however, which you can tailor to meet your learning needs.

People learn in all different ways, and no single method is the best for everyone. The book recognizes that and presents the learner with several suggestions for each study area.

The first part of the book focuses on outlining the four core language skills of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Kerstin explains that while many teaching systems emphasize one of these skills over the other, you really need to be challenged and grow equally in all areas to truly master the language.

Kerstin gives the learner the basic questions he or she needs to be asking themselves to assess their current learning practices while laying out the tasks they should do to become experienced in each skill. She then sets up a great mechanism to allow you to determine your weakest and strongest areas, so you can move on to tailoring your study routines.

The real meat of the book is in section two, where the learner can take what they learned about their skills in the first part and explore many ways of improving and fine-tuning them.



This part really showed me how well Kerstin's understands the learner and the teaching process. She goes into specific detail on the reasons, gives examples, and discusses various ways a learner can improve their listening, reading, speaking, and writing.

You are probably thinking that you already know how to study all those things, and I am sure you know some good ways. I also know that you are going to find many of the tips Kerstin to be highly insightful and helpful. She doesn't just list things you can do; she addresses the mindset behind them and informs you of things to look for while you are studying.

For example, in the writing section, it might seem fairly obvious that we can practise putting down our thoughts in text in the new language then having another person, preferably a native speaker, read it over and make corrections. But something I hadn't thought about was the power of taking the corrected version and *writing it all out again*. Why? As Kerstin explains, seeing your written work coming together correctly is a huge psychological boost. You aren't just taking the correction and thinking "I'll do better next time". You need to really work through it again, for both your morale and your memory.

In fact, almost the entire writing section could be taken out and used as a great guide to writing in general, like for a blog or other publication. Here you can understand how she has come to be such a good author - she has done as she preaches and is passing it on to you.

One of the most valuable tips that hit home for me is "Forget about what you 'should' know". It addresses the mindset of how we can get wrongly caught up in all the small things, like perfect pronunciation or huge vocabulary, because the person to whom we are talking isn't trying to judge us on that. They are interested in what you are trying to say. Focus on the broader aspect of communicating; the smaller details will come after.

The last section of the book contains several short interviews with experienced learners. Each of them describes what a difference learning another language has made to them. They also each give a unique tip or exercise to help in the study process.

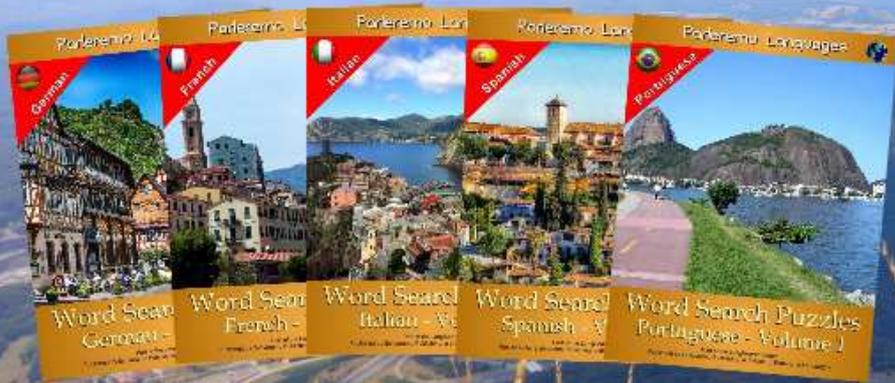
My favourite of these, shared by Mickey Mangan, is to randomly select a word from the dictionary - without looking at the meaning - then seek out a native speaker to help you pronounce it properly. Keep at it until you can repeat it perfectly, *then* go back and look up the meaning. Because you spent so much time on the word itself and then wanted to find out the meaning, it will stick much more firmly in your mind and you will be able to recall it easily.

Overall, I think the biggest theme I took away from the book is that you really need to apply yourself to learning a language, and you need to tackle all four skills together, so you have a balanced learning experience. That might seem obvious, but too many people nowadays seem to want a quick trick to learn everything, when there really isn't one.

If you are serious about learning a new language, or about improving your current learning methods, then you definitely should have this book on your shelf. You need to read it through completely. Then read it again. Then read it a third time. Seriously. There is so much intelligent thought and practical ideas in it that you will need to re-visit it a few times to make sure you absorb every ounce of it.

Then, if you haven't already, you need to visit Kerstin's blog *Fluent Language* ([fluentlanguage.co.uk](http://fluentlanguage.co.uk)) and keep up on her newest thoughts and tips. You should also find her podcast on iTunes, in which she often interviews other language teachers, innovators, and polyglots, discovering their methods for learning, teaching, or both. I guarantee you will have fun as you learn! **PT**

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## General Language

### The Polyglot Project

The idea behind the *Polyglot Project* is to help you get fluent in whatever language you're trying to learn. They have pulled together a library of foreign language content for you to work with, starting with classic literature from all over the world.

<http://www.polyglotproject.com/>

*English, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian, Greek, Polish, Portuguese, Danish, Catalan, Czech, Norwegian, Turkish, Finnish, Japanese, Dutch, Swedish*



## Language Schools and Institutes

### Goethe Institute

The *Goethe Institute* is a non-profit German cultural institution operational worldwide, promoting the study of the German language abroad and encouraging international cultural exchange and relations.

<https://www.goethe.de/de/index.html>

*German*



## Language Course Sites

### Lingolia

*Lingolia* is for people of all ages who wish to learn foreign languages and offers effective help for the languages English, French, Spanish and German. The grammar of these languages is the main focus.

<https://deutsch.lingolia.com/de/>

*English, French, Spanish, German*



## Specific Language

### Bahasa Indonesia: The Indonesian Language

This is a website dedicated to teaching both Indonesian and Malay. It has basic courses and links on culture, giving a little background about both Indonesian and Malay.

<http://ipll.manoa.hawaii.edu/indonesian/>

*Indonesian, Malay*



## Specific Language

### University Of Hawaii Khmer

This site is from the University of Hawaii and has a lot of information on the Khmer language. It has links for Khmer classes, Khmer fonts and learning materials. It also has a lot of cultural information. They offer a course at the University as well as an online course.

<http://learnkhmer.net/index.htm>

*Khmer*



## Newspapers & Magazines

### Blesk

One of the most widely circulated Czech newspapers, *Blesk* is a daily tabloid published in Prague, the Czech Republic. Its name translates as “flash”. It covers celebrities, events, games and gossip.

<http://www.blesk.cz/>

*Czech*



### Naya Patrika

*Naya Patrika* is a daily newspaper in Kathmandu, Nepal, covering local news, sports, business, jobs, and community events.

<http://www.enayapatrika.com/>

*Nepali*



### Vientiane Mai

*Vientiane Mai* is a Laotian language newspaper published by the Government of Laos. It reflects the position of the Government and the Communist Party.

<http://www.vientianemai.net/>

*Lao*



## Credits

### Letter From the Editor

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Images:** Petey: Woman on beach

### Polyglot Events All Around The World - You Are Not Alone

**Writer:** Jimmy Mello

**Images:**

Polyglot Workshops: Trio of polyglots

Jimmy Mello: Marlon Couto Ribeiro giving presentation (title); Jimmy Mello presenting; Polyglot Workshop in London; Jimmy Mello at the Book Fair; Polyglot Club; Picnic after the Gathering; Jomo Concert; Konrad Jerzak at Sekrety Poliglotow; Polyglots Richards, Mello, Rawlings, Simcott  
unknown: Polyglot Conference in Novi Sad;

### Playing Games with Language

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Images:** Petey: Trophies; Kids on laptop; Chess board; 3D Minecraft scene

**Sources:**

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- The screenshot of Rosetta Stone belongs to Rosetta Stone.
- The cover of "Choose Your Own Adventure book - Cave of Time" is copyright Bantam Books.

### Spanish E-training – The 'Big Bang' Investment

**Writer:** Kendal Knetemann

**Images:** Petey: Auditorium (title); Classroom; Computer

### Can a Language Die?

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Images:**

ralfh: Statue in snow

Jun: Eteocyriot writing

Petey: Stone inscription in Latin (title); Latin book; Day of the Dead skeletons; Coptic liturgic inscription; Syriac book script

### At The Cinema - La Casa del Fin de los Tiempos

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Sources:**

- "The House at the End of Time" Internet Movie Database <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2640474>>

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### Languages in Peril - Scottish Gaelic

**Writer:** Maureen F Millward

**Images:** Maureen F Millward: View of Scotland; Multilingual sign; Maureen in Scotland

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**Words in Your Mouth - Apple****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki**Images:** Petey: Apples in orchard (splash page); Collection of apples (title); Person pouring apple slices; Apple strudel; Bins of apples; Chocolate covered apples; Apple farmer; Apple pastries; Basket of apples; Bowl of applesauce; Slice of apple pie; Sliced apples on plate; Apple cider**Celebrations - Nag Panchami****Writer:** Sonja Krüger**Images:**

Krish Dulal: Statue of Naga being worshipped

Gregor Younger: Snake charmer

Petey: A snake shrine (nagabana) (title); Scene from Mahabharata

**Sources:**

- "Nag Panchami" Wikipedia <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag\\_Panchami](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nag_Panchami)>
- "Nag Panchami" Rudra Centre <<http://www.rudraksha-ratna.com/nag-panchami.html>>
- "Nag Panchami" Maps of India <<http://www.mapsofindia.com/events/india/nag-panchami.html>>
- "Naga Panchami" i love india <<http://festivals.iloveindia.com/naag-panchami/>>

**Where Are You?****Writer:** Sonja Krüger**Images:** Petey: Mystery image**Book Look****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki**At A Glance****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

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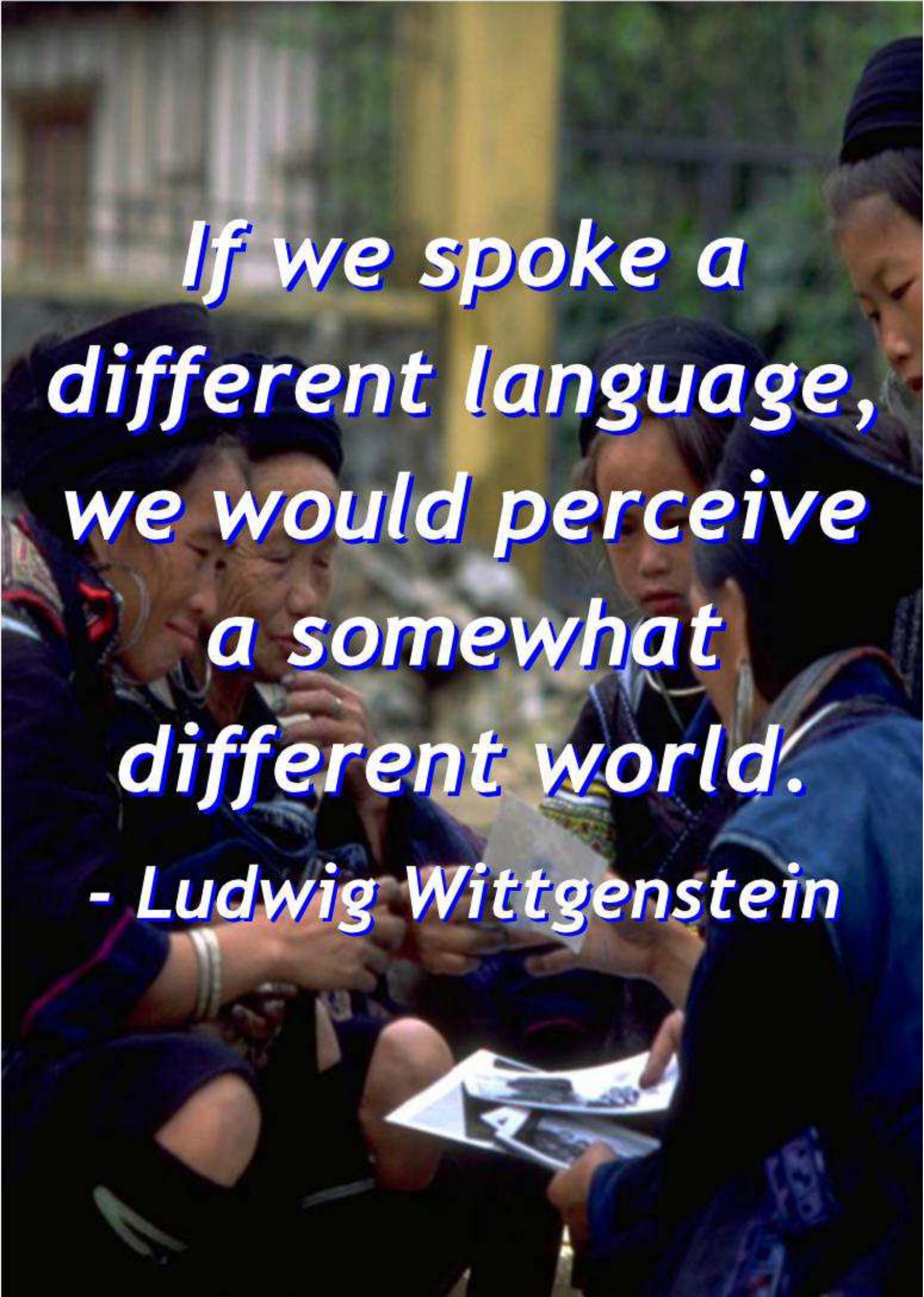
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A group of people, likely from a traditional community, are gathered around a document. They are wearing dark blue traditional clothing with intricate patterns and headwear. The background is slightly blurred, showing a building with a yellow pillar. The text is overlaid on the image in a bold, blue, italicized font.

*If we spoke a  
different language,  
we would perceive  
a somewhat  
different world.*

*- Ludwig Wittgenstein*