

# Parrot Time

The Thinking of Speaking

Issue #21 May / June 2016

## Language and Power

See how they affect each other

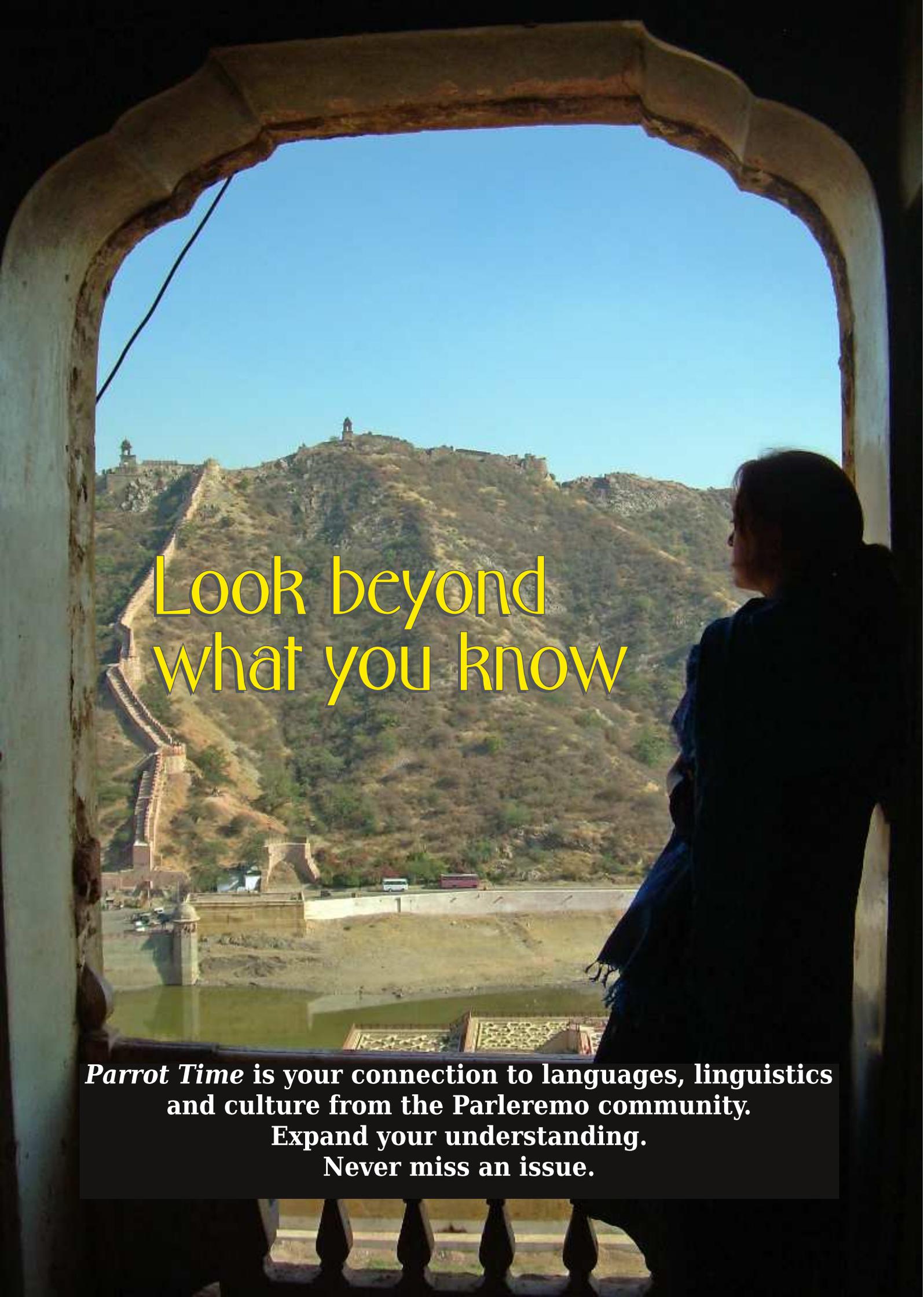
## 4 Ways To Learn Through Reading

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A woman in a blue sari is seen from the side, 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

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# Parrot Time

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**Editor:** Erik Zidowecki  
**Email:** editor@parrottime.com

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**Cover:** Practice your reading skills whenever you can. This young woman is taking a few minutes from her day to read in her new language.

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Indonesia?

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Make friends,  
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## *A Kind Word*

In our modern world of computers and social networks, with each of us trying to have our voices heard while isolating ourselves, it is important to remember how we are all still quite human.

It is easy to forget when we are interacting with names on a screen, explaining how someone you will never meet is wrong because they don't share your opinion, that there actually is a person behind the words.

While we spend our time "liking" and "sharing" the newest funny meme or another (often false) post about a political candidate, we can even forget sometimes that we, too, are individuals with fears and doubts.

In the language community, when people are struggling to master a new language, it is very easy to get into a habit of correcting others. While that is often appreciated, we must also remember to encourage the learner, to let them know how well they are doing (or if they aren't, then diplomatically comment on how they are improving).

We also need to remember to acknowledge the people who are giving back to the community. There are thousands of people who daily pour all their energy, time, and even money into creating resources and events for other language enthusiasts.

While we might be thankful for those people's efforts, we must also let them know that. They might seem to be very confident in what they are doing, they are also probably struggling daily with self-doubt, like others, and wondering if what they are doing is desired, appreciated, or even worth doing at all.

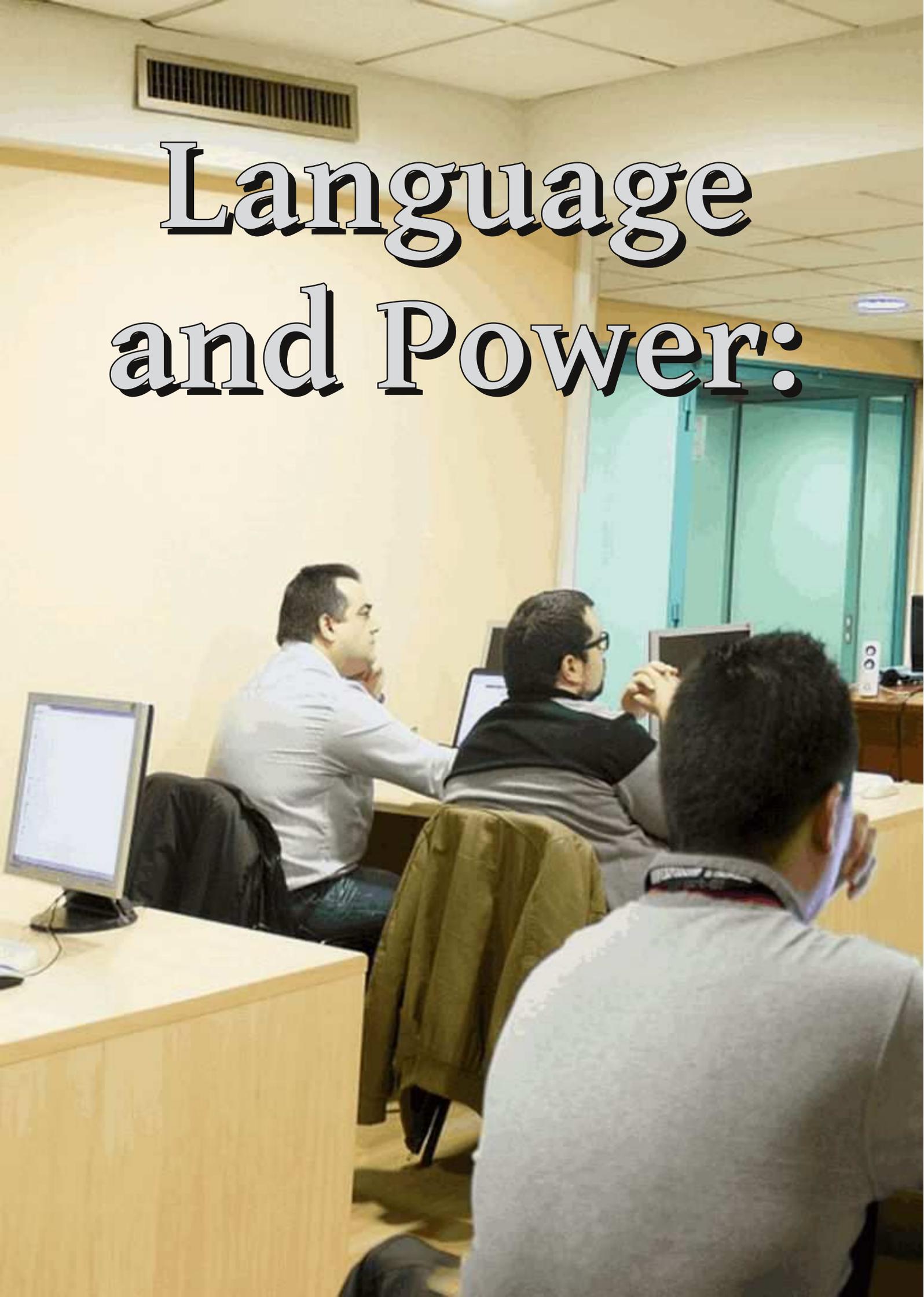
So when we are racing around doing our own things, please remember to give a kind word to those around you. Liking and sharing is fine, but it can never replace the simple expression of "good job" or "thank you".

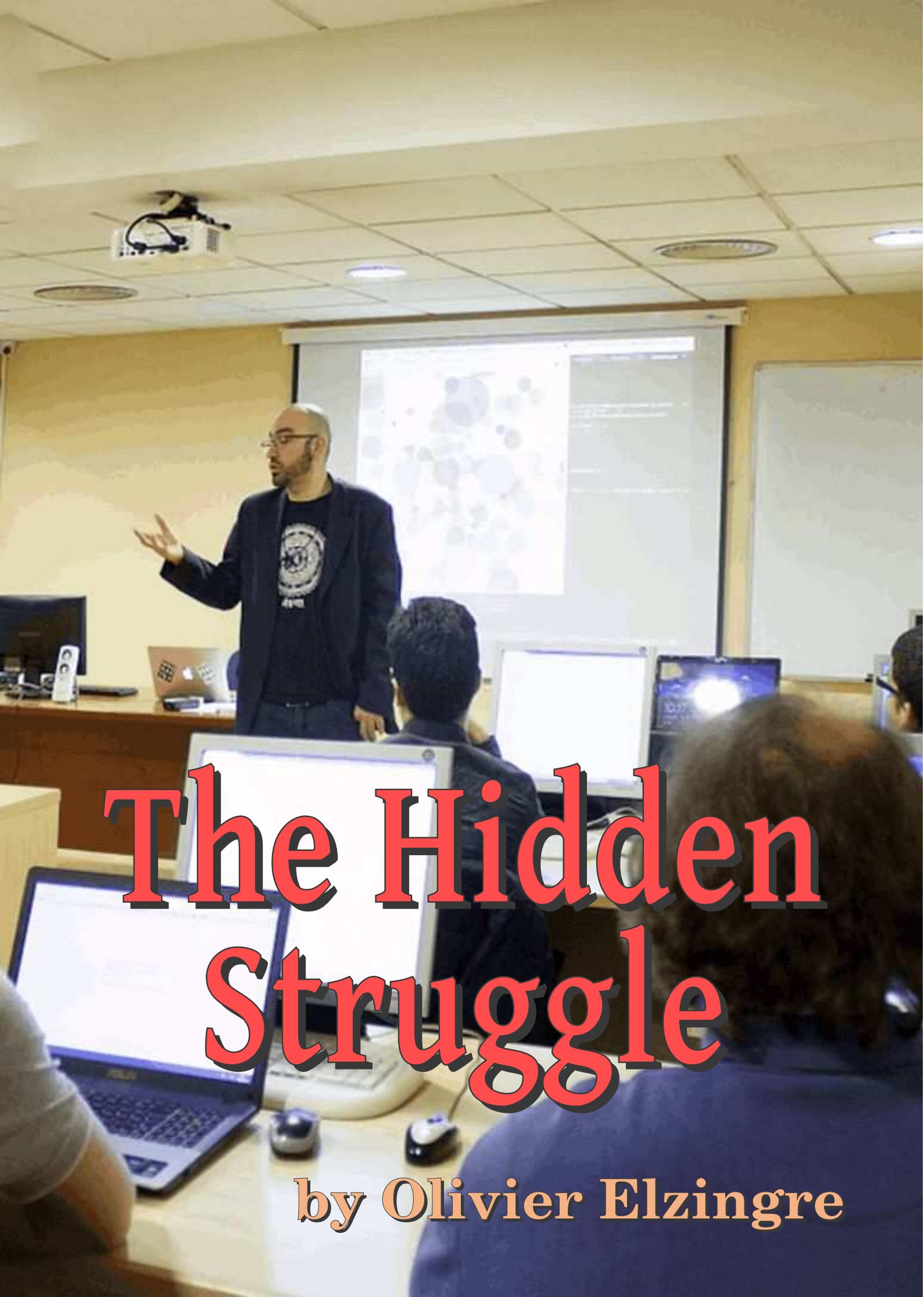
To all the readers who continue to support Parrot Time, thank you.



*Erik Zidowecki*  
ERIK ZIDOWECKI  
EDITOR IN CHIEF

# Language and Power:



A photograph of a man in a dark blazer and glasses presenting in a lecture hall. He is standing in front of a large projection screen displaying a diagram of interconnected nodes. Several audience members are seated at desks with laptops and monitors in the foreground. A large red title is overlaid on the image.

# The Hidden Struggle

by Olivier Elzingre

It would be difficult to argue against the view that language has been key in human evolution and an instrument into making large conglomerates of people possible. While defining language would be a very difficult task, one I am not ready to indulge into, certain dimensions within the phenomenon of language have drawn attention in research and in language planning at governmental levels. In this article, I propose to look into one of these dimensions, that of power, and three instances of conversation that characterise language as an instrument of power.

Power is a dimension which has been recognised at all levels of language, including everyday conversations, regulatory texts, and culturally embedded discourses. Strangely enough, the less detached from actual speakers' language is, the less conscious the speakers appear of the power dimension within their language. What I mean here is that when two friends have a chat, power is often not explicitly thought about. Whereas when a Prime Minister is interviewed, power is at the forefront of their thinking. This lack of consciousness at the "pedestrian" level makes often implicit the unequal distribution of power between the speakers. The distribution of power can be felt at all levels of interaction, from chats with your mates, to professional environments, to a simple hello with a stranger.

What I am particularly interested here is the power which is distributed in every day conversations rather than on the discourses that define national political or religious ideology. These discourses influence individual instances of conversation, but I would rather leave them to people who know more than I do about the topic.

Here then are three conversations, two of them spoken, one written, to illustrate what I mean by power through language.

The first example comes from a conversation I overheard as I was visiting a school for my research. Two colleagues were chatting about students' work when the first one, a physical education teacher, uttered the adjective "succinct", pronouncing it /səksɪŋkt/ (as "suksinkt"). The other one, an English teacher, corrected him, arguing the word should be pronounced /səsɪŋkt/ (as "sus-sinkt"). The first teacher accepted his mistake



and moved on. You may or may not know this, but the dictionary will tell you that the PE teacher was correct. Evidently, in the structure of the school, these two teachers were equal in status – both were experienced and of similar age, and their gender difference did not seem to play an evident part in their exchange. But by virtue of their teaching methods, it was assumed that the English teacher was right. The issue is not really whether there is a correct answer to the pronunciation of this word, but rather why the English teacher felt the need to correct his colleague.

If you have ever worked as a teacher or among teachers you might have noticed a sense of misplaced competition among members of different faculty (and among members of the same faculty as well!). Teaching English for example, implicitly places that person as an expert in the subject compared to those who don't teach it. An English teacher may, however, assume that position or as one as an ongoing learner in their field. The English teacher in the example above chose to strengthen her status as the expert, while at the same placing her interlocutor in an inferior position by correcting him.

Reading this example, you may think about the unfairness of the English teacher's behaviour and be drawn to admire the PE teacher for making no fuss about the issue. However, you may also consider that the first part of the conversation, which I didn't witness, was about a student who it seemed had a strong preference for the PE teacher over the English teacher. This part of the conversation may or may not have been mishandled by the PE teacher, but at the beginning of the

conversation, the distribution of power would have been in favour of the PE teacher. The English teacher could have felt that her status was threatened in her conversation with him, prompting her to rectify the balance of power through an assertion of language power.

**Here's another situation**, a frequent conversation between my mother and me. When I speak with my London born mother, I tend to use some Australianisms. One particularly that gets her goat is my answer to her question "how are you". I will say "good, thanks and you?" On occasion, she corrected me, saying that my answer should be "well", rather than "good". Grammatically, my mother is obviously correct: an adverb should be used rather than an adjective. However, my answer is entirely idiomatic. Since I don't intend to speak like a dictionary, I chose to express myself as my fellow Melbournites do.

In this second situation, the relationship is complicated by the fact that each speaker in the conversation may not agree on the nature of their relationship. To my mother, I am still her child, albeit a 40 year old one, and therefore our relationship is unequal. In addition, she is an English native speaker,



whereas English is my second language. To me, the balance of power should be more even, based on the fact that I am an adult, and by virtue of my language-specialised education. Therefore, when my mother corrects my English, I take it with a grain of salt. At best, it can be said in this situation that the power negotiation is not settled and that the journey for my claim to a balanced rests in her hands.

It is evident that both my mother and I have ulterior motives for pulling the power blanket over ourselves. For my mother, as the long-recognised provider of her children's values, our becoming adult is no reason to no longer subscribe to her maternal influence. As for me, married and father of one, professional and owning my house (or rather its mortgage), the maternal influence, however comfortable and reassuring, appears somewhat irrelevant as far as my language usage goes.

In the two examples above, the power distribution can be negotiated, successfully or not, by the participants. The reason for this is that there is no firm institutional structure that dictates power distribution one way or the other. The negotiation that takes place rests on circumstantial conditions. The teachers teach different subject and the student of their focus has a preference for one whereas my mother and I have differences based on the circumstances of our birth; she



carried me for 9 months and we are native of different languages.

When conversations are inscribed in an institutional context, the power distribution is usually pre-established. Difference in status are a key feature allowing for the organisation of the institution and the effective understanding of each and everyone's role within the structure. The inequality between speakers that arises from status differences should be expressed in speech patterns. The next example illustrates this point.

An American professor, Celeste Kinginger, writes that while on exchange, some of her students gained pragmatic knowledge in their target language (French in this case), to a greater extent than their academic language. When emailing her in French, they did not follow the conventions usually afforded to communicating with a person in her position. She wittingly writes that her "students had the pragmatic rope to hang themselves", sharing the following email she received from a student:

*Salut madame! Tu vas bien? Je dois t'écrire une vraie lettre sur paper à cause que ici, les*

*ordinateurs sont foutu. Ça marche jamais puis ya des tas de gens dans la salle. Putain, tu peux pas savoir combien ça m'emmerde ! (Hey Madam ! How's it going ? I have to write you a real letter on paper because of that here, the computers are f\*\*\*ed. They never work and there are heaps of people in the room. S\*\*\*, I can't even tell you how much that p\*\*\*es me off!)*

**Kinginger was making the point** that students learn to use colloquialisms before they understand how or when to use it. The example, however, also helps describe language as a power medium. The student who wrote these words is seen as making potentially a major faux-pas, in using language that implies closeness between the speakers as well as an informal context. The context is important. You may be working with your closest friend, but in the work place, you still observe certain "rules of engagement" so-to-speak.

Thus in the context of this communication, the relationship between the participants is clear. One is an undergraduate student, the

other a world-acclaimed professor. The status gap between them is so vast that the student's faux-pas cannot be considered offensive. The student not only has no claim to a share of the power, they are also not in a position to negotiate its balance. This is because the institution which frames their relationship is regimented far beyond either of the speakers' realm of influence. You might argue that the professor is in a position to "informalise" the relationship, but she would then expose herself to problems. A doubt over her professional objectivity during assessments being one of them.

Institutions that regiment its employees' communication styles too closely are often criticised. Yet, it is also the clarity of expectations that allows these institutions to function effectively, leaving no employee guessing about their code of behaviour towards others.

**When talking about power,** it is difficult not to assign a moral or ethical dimension to the problem. However, in many cases there is no need for it. Power is a natural ingredient to language and one which has been reflected in

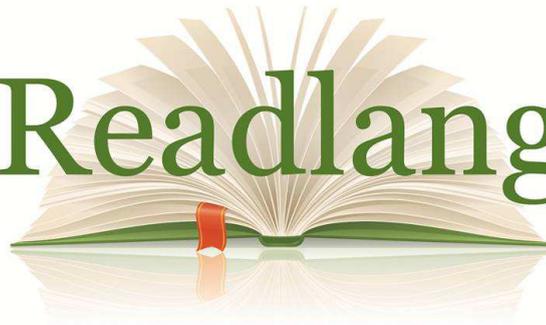
our social organisation. It is natural for anyone to seek what they consider the right balance of power in all relationships, as it is assumed that relationships can only exist with the maintenance of power distribution, equal or not.

What I haven't explored in this article are strategies allowing speakers to exert power in their language: swearing, humour, aggression and even manipulation are just some examples of strategies. These strategies are known and even used by most speakers on regular bases. Behind the curtain of our utterances, we make choices at every turn of phrase to use or not some of them. This is why we can never claim that language is nothing more than a means of communication. It is fundamentally a key to social cohesion. **PT**

*Olivier Elzingre is a PhD candidate researching motivation and identity development in study abroad contexts. He teaches high school French in Australia. Correspondence to [olivierrelzingre@gmail.com](mailto:olivierrelzingre@gmail.com)*



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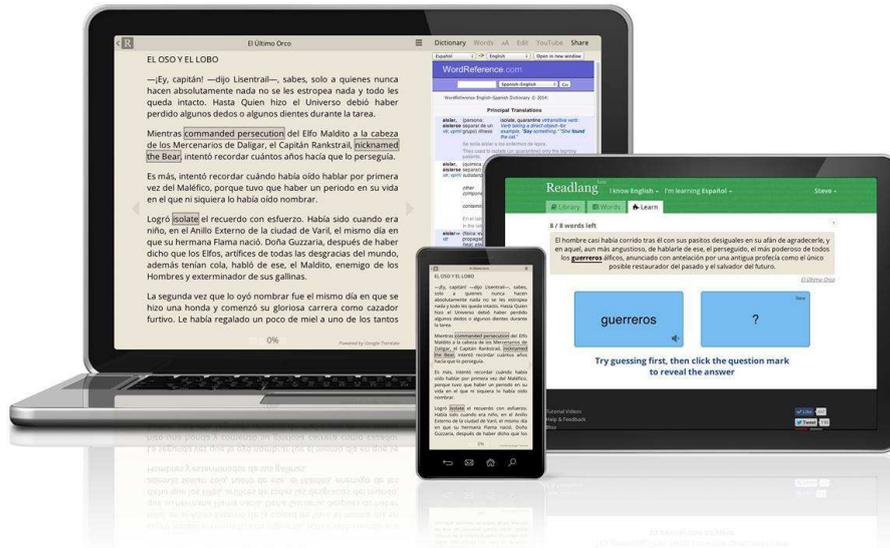


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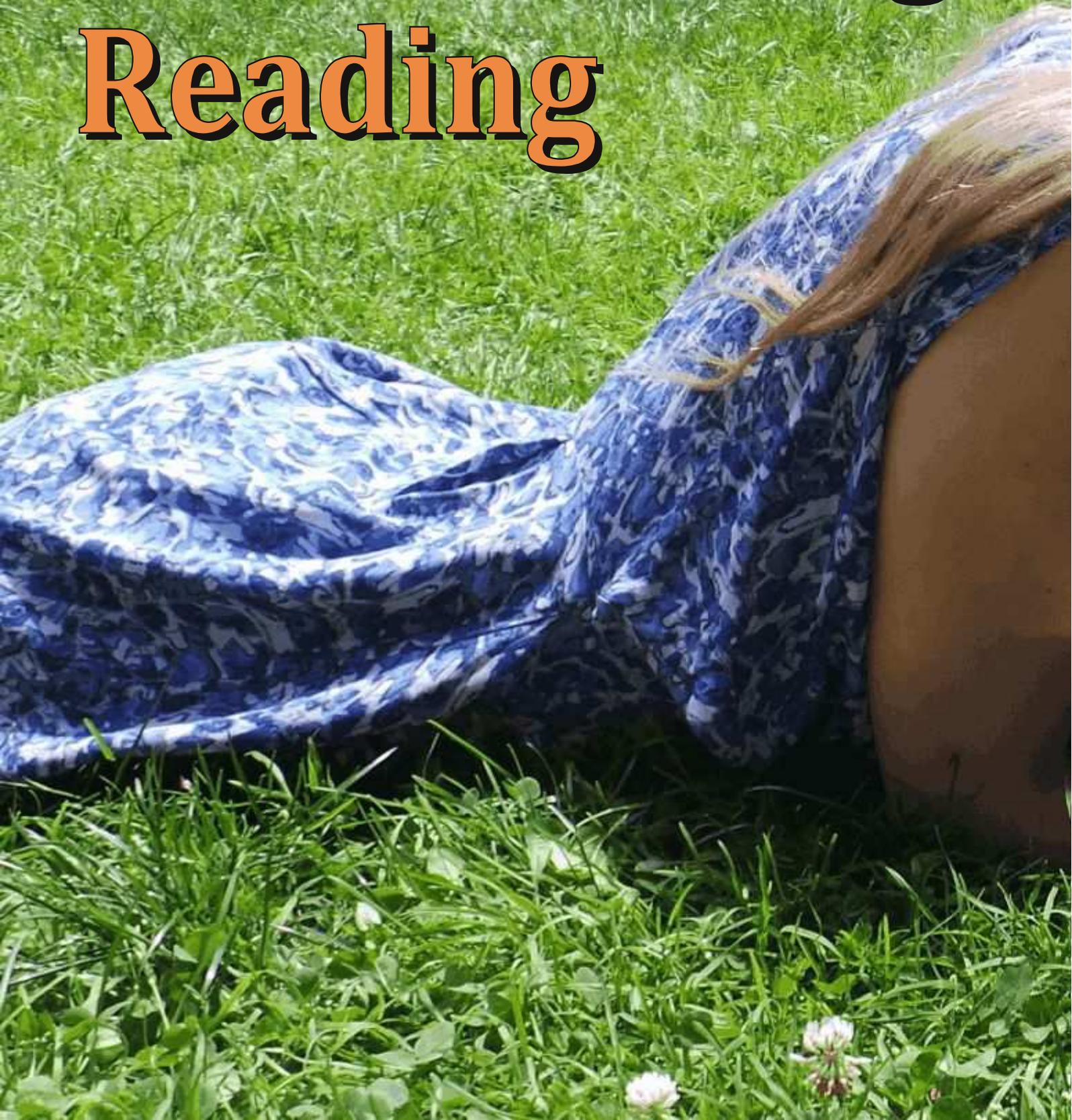
Program includes: Lodging for 12 days, 11 nights at Antiche Mura B&B, ALL BREAKFASTS & ALL DINNERS, 7 days of Italian Classes (28 hours language instruction), 1 Cooking Class, Participation in the Giostra del Saracino – the local jousting festival, Medieval Dinner Party – Propiziatorio del Saracino, Italian Movie Night, Wine Tasting Event, Visit to Basilica di San Francesco to see the paintings of Piero della Francesca, Visit Arezzo’s Antiquities Fair, Bus Excursion to Anghiari, Bus Excursion to Siena, Bus Excursion to Cortona, Opportunities to meet the locals and take your Italian language skills to the next level!

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# 4 Ways To Learn Through Reading





**by Teddy Nee**

Reading is a simple, easy-to-do, and interesting pastime that everyone can do. I have seen many people spending hours reading in coffee shops, libraries, and bookstores. Whether you read for fun or read to gather information, did you know that you could also learn languages through reading? I have been using this method most of the time to learn many languages, and in fact, this is the most comfortable method that I have ever used, perhaps because reading is my hobby.

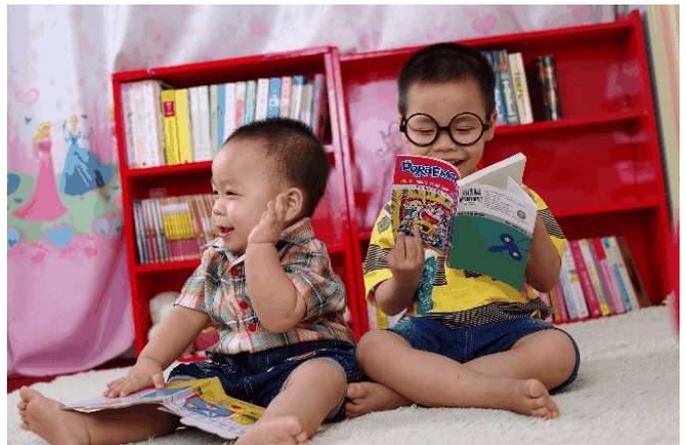
### Choose what to read

#### 1. Not heavy topic, easy reading is enough

You might be a businessperson, you speak English, and you started to learn Spanish less than a year ago because you are going to expand your market to Latin America. It is normal that you are intrigued to read business review in Spanish, but hold on! Are you really ready for that? You might still be struggling with basic conversation, so it is best to improve in this fundamental area of a language first before continuing to a much higher level.

Keep in mind that you are, let's say, 20 years old, and you just started to learn a foreign language. Your level is not the same as that of the native speaker of the language but it might be just the same with a 5-year-old speaker of that language. In other words, you are 20-year-old person in your language but you are not a 20-year-old person in your target language if we take fluency level as the judgement.

Therefore, it is recommended to choose reading topics based on your level of understanding. If you are still considered a beginner, you can read children books. Children books usually have short sentences and less difficult words than what a novel could have. The main purpose here is to get comprehensible input so you need to start from the easiest, and let your knowledge improve your vocabulary to understand more difficult topics.



#### 2. Not long articles that could make you fall asleep

The length of the article is not important. Never think that you would learn much more when you read longer articles. In fact, I'm afraid that it might demotivate you with a large workload. Start with short articles, it can even be just one paragraph. Then, if you think that you can continue, read another paragraph. You can also take a rest in between to review new words that you have learned during your reading.

The easiness to read depends on your language background because when you are reading, you see the written text of the language. An Indonesian speaker will need much more effort to read Chinese characters than Korean or Japanese speakers. This is because Chinese characters exist in Korean and Japanese but not in Indonesian. Therefore, Korean and Japanese speakers are more familiar with the characters although the pronunciation might be slightly different.

#### 3. No time, no problem, read online from anywhere

Some people like to buy books from bookstores or borrow from libraries, some other even like to spend time in both places just to read books, without buying or borrowing. However, you need time to go to the bookstore or the library, and you may need to take public transportation, so it means that you would spend much more time not reading.

We are lucky nowadays because we have the internet, and the internet has changed our way of life. You can simply google any topic you want to read or download. If you are



a typical busy person who doesn't have much time to spend in bookstore or library, you can read online on the way while commuting or waiting. You can read from anywhere! And you will never run out of time to read.

I read almost everywhere -- at home, office, school or public places. It is free, easy, and fun because if you do it online, you also have the ability to share it with your friends what you have just read instantly. This is because many websites have had social media sharing buttons nowadays.

#### **4. No worries, you can read anything**

I have mentioned about reading children books. Besides, you can also read other written media, such as magazines, newspapers, novels, and even brochures and posters. Whatever you read, you will learn something, and reading activity helps you to improve your vocabulary. If you read about lifestyle magazines, you will learn many words relating to daily life. If you read about brochures, you can learn words related to the products or service being promoted.

When you go to public places, such as an airport, train station, or shopping mall, you will most likely see announcements or signboards in two or more languages. This is because these places are usually places that foreigners would go. You can even learn many new words by reading announcements and signboards! In general, English is the common foreign language used in this context but if you are lucky, you would also see the text written in multiple languages.

#### **Know more words**

##### **1. Read and check dictionary**

I still remember when I just came to Taiwan, a dictionary was my "good friend". I didn't speak Mandarin and didn't recognize Chinese characters. I really pushed myself to the max to survive in this foreign land. I carried a dictionary app wherever I went, and I checked words in it anytime, anywhere.

Apparently, this habit continues to grow in me and I still check a dictionary to learn languages nowadays. However, I don't always check a dictionary because it sometimes

## 4 Ways To Learn Through Reading

makes my reading not fun at all, so what I do is to check the word only if it has appeared multiple times. A word could have multiple meanings, so understanding from the context is still necessary. You sometimes can even guess the meaning!

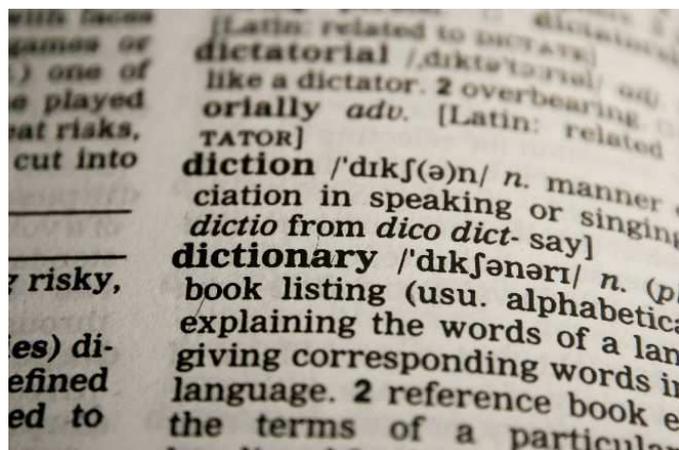
There are many digital dictionary available online, and perhaps, Google Translate is the most popular. Personally, I think that it is quite good for translating single words, however, translating longer text would still be better done by human.

### 2. Read first in the language that you understand

Some popular books are translated into multiple languages in order to be able to capture a much larger part of the market from different countries. One of the most popular is *The Little Prince*. This novel is even available in Esperanto! Apart from books, you can read articles like those in Wikipedia. I like Wikipedia so much. All of the articles are available in more than 1 language. It means you have the capability to read the same topic in several languages, and you can start with the language you understand in order to get the main idea of the article before reading it in other languages.

### 3. Prepare a notebook, easy for review

When you see important words and phrases while reading, you can write them down in a notebook so you can review them later whether to refresh your memory or to use the words and phrases in real conversation. You can even create your own phrasebook after you have accumulated many words and phrases.



Through this method, I have created a phrasebook template in which I use English as the first language and second language could be any languages that I want to learn by using this book. The content consists of words and phrases that I think would be useful for me, that I would use in real conversation, such as some phrases about meeting new people and ordering food in the restaurant.

### 4. Which one is more important: vocabulary or grammar?

This is one of many frequently asked questions. I believe that both vocabulary and grammar are important for mastering a language. It is always best if you can excel in both areas, but which one would you choose when you have limited time and resources?

Grammar comprises a set of rules about constructing sentences. It is like the walls of a building. On the other hand, vocabulary consists of words. If you know many words but lacking of grammar skill, you might be able to express your thinking in several words, but not in a complete structured sentence. On the contrary, if you are good in grammar but not in vocabulary, it would be difficult for you to express yourself because you don't know which word to use.

In my opinion, I prefer vocabulary over grammar because I want to have the capability to express myself in different ways. With the lack of grammar skill, I might speak like an infant but that doesn't matter for me because I believe that I can learn from my mistakes and as the time goes by, my skill will increase by itself.



### Learn how to write

#### 1. Learn linking words

Linking words connect ideas among sentences. If you are not familiar with linking words, they are words you can see in the beginning of the sentence or in the middle of a sentence. Some of the examples are “because”, “then”, “so that”, to name a few. As you are reading, you will see these words repeatedly, and soon after that, you will realize that these words are special words that you will quickly remember. Omitting any of these words would make the sentence sounds unnatural or even bad.

Because linking words are important in either speech or writing, they can be the priority to learn because you sound better and more fluent when you incorporate them into your speech. To my astonishment, linking words are not commonly taught in language classes.

#### 2. Learn writing skill

If you want to write well, you need to practice writing. However, it is recommended to learn how other people write before you write. Learn their writing styles, pay attention to the punctuations, learn how they start the first paragraph and how they finish the last paragraph. Learn also how they explain the main topic of the writing, and how many lines in a paragraph they use or how many paragraph per subtopic they have.

#### 3. Learn how to construct sentences

When you read, you get comprehensible input of the language. That is how you can understand the meaning. However, your understanding doesn't guarantee your proficiency. If you can understand 90% of a text, it doesn't mean you are able to explain the main topic easily. It is because your brain needs to think of words and grammatical rules and how to combine all of these as you are constructing sentences.

## 4 Ways To Learn Through Reading

By frequent reading, you can get ready-to-use sentences that you can mix and match together, or substitute part of it with part of other sentence. For example, you see “I want to go home because my mom is waiting” and “You want to eat because you are hungry”, then you can make a sentence by using parts of these sentences “I want to go home because you are hungry”. It might be ridiculous but this method is effective to train your brain.

### 4. Learn conversation

Imagine you are in a situation where you meet someone who can converse with you, and both of you start asking questions and answering to each other. You can use your imagination to create dialogues by having one character to ask questions and the other character answer the questions. When you are more experienced, you can even create more formal dialogues, such as closing a business deal or speaking in a business meeting. Imagine yourself being the main character, what would you say and how would you say it? Create the picture in your mind so you can be better-prepared when you face the situation in real.

### Not just language learning

#### 1. Read about other cultures and customs

Almost every language learner I know mentioned that they also learn about other cultures when they learn a new language. Some others even stated that their motivation of learning a new language is because they like the culture of the speakers. Language is certainly more than just a communication tool. It has history that evolves with time.



Have you ever wondered why most countries in Latin America have Spanish as their official languages? Why English is the most popular international language nowadays? Or why Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, and French are similar? When you learn a language, you can also learn about the story behind these facts, about the language past, present, and future.

#### 2. Read about the latest information

I like to read news articles and I read it every day. It is much more fun when you can read news from different countries news agencies and read about what is happening in other side of the world in different languages. Although there are also news from a country that is available in several languages in order to reach a greater scope of readers.

You may also find that some information is reserved much more in the original language than in foreign languages where it is usually translated. This kind of information is usually more detailed information, such as about the local history or any news that is not big enough to reach worldwide market.

#### 3. Be able to use different perspective and different way of thinking

Besides knowing the latest news, you can also learn how to see matters from different perspectives. For instance, American media must have different point of view towards Middle Eastern countries than Indonesian media. You can only acquire this knowledge when you know different languages.

When you see things from different perspectives, you will tend to have an independent thinking rather than just believing. If

someone commented negatively about something, it doesn't mean that the fact is as what is commented. Having the capability to think independently makes you a critical thinker, you would never jump into the conclusion before thinking about it twice or thrice.

#### 4. Increase knowledge

On top of everything, learning language through reading benefits everyone in many aspects. You can learn about vocabulary, grammar, phrases, writing skills, and you can even get the latest information and be a critical thinker. You can even create your own phrasebook that you can use to learn any languages and you can learn quickly because you prioritize some words and phrases that are essential for you in real conversation.

Knowing more languages certainly gives your more opportunities to talk with people

from different backgrounds, and thus, you get to learn about their way of life and mindset. By the time you reach this phase, you will feel that this world is not that small as what you used to believe. There are much more to uncover when you leave your comfort zone, such as speaking foreign languages. You will start to accept and cherish differences that we have as human beings. **PT**

*Teddy is an avid language learner, blogger, engineer, and a collector. He has a dream to make this world a better place through language learning. Apart from learning languages, he also likes reading and playing ukulele. You can speak with him in Medan Hokkien, Indonesian, English, Chinese Mandarin, Spanish, and Esperanto. Visit his blog at [www.neeslanguageblog.com](http://www.neeslanguageblog.com)*



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# Language Learning is for everyone!

by Gary McCann

## A little bit of history...

Let me start by telling you I am not a polyglot and I am not an amazing language learner. I spent years dabbling in holiday Italian and I completely sucked at it. I had almost given up thinking I just wasn't suited to that sort of thing.

Like many other failed language learners before me, I had tried throwing money at the problem. I had purchased many courses over the years but none had worked for me. What I hadn't realized at the time was that I had been caught by a sales pitch; someone selling me a product that claimed, for the grand sum of x dollars, I would be speaking my target language in no time. I was completely sucked in and then assumed that the issue was mine and I just couldn't do it.

Then in July last year I signed up to the Add1Challenge to learn Italian in 90 days and everything changed. Suddenly I was part of a community of like-minded language learners and I realised that I wasn't dreadful at all.

What I was lacking wasn't ability but rather it was how I was learning that was the problem.

All I needed to succeed was a decent variety of resources, a consistent routine and a little bit of support.

After the challenge finished I decided that I would try to save others the same pain and, with the gentle encouragement of others, the Language Learning Library was born (<http://languagelearninglibrary.com>).

## So what is the Language Learning Library?

The Language Learning Library is a site that allows users to find, share, rate and review language learning resources. OK so that's the site tagline, let's break that down a little.

## It's a language learning directory

Visitors can search the Language Learning Library to find materials in various languages - there are currently 59 languages listed on the site and this is growing every week.



Language Learning Library



For some of the more popular languages, like Spanish, simply selecting a language can return a large number of results.

To help with this, there are additional filters on the page that allow you to target resources that are suited to the level you are at and to narrow this down to specific types of materials.

So whether you are looking for an upper beginner grammar resource or a site with intermediate video content - you can easily find it!

## It's a review site

One of the problems I faced when starting out was finding good honest reviews of language learning products. Most of the time I landed on a sales page or a review that was written in order to drive sales through an affiliate link.

The Language Learning Library is different. Absolutely anyone can sign up to the site and leave a rating or review for any of the resources, both are then immediately available to everyone else. Star ratings show next to each item in the search results and all user submitted reviews are displayed at the bottom of the resource's page.

Can this be exploited and succumb to ingenuine reviews by product owners - absolutely -

in exactly the same way they can on any other review site. These do tend to be in the minority and, as long as you read the other reviews too, then it's quite easy to spot these a mile off.

Product owners are free to post their own products and also review anyone else's. Ingenuine reviews are definitely frowned upon and will be removed if discovered.

## It's a community site

Absolutely anyone can sign up to the site and post a resource that they have found. The site is designed to make this as quick and simple as possible.

Simply give it a title, a link and a short description, select a few check boxes and that's it - the resource is then available for anyone else to find.

Absolutely anything can be listed on the site whether it be a website, blog, course, podcast, youtube channel, book or app. If it's language learning related then it's allowed.

Shortly after launching the site, I discovered that finding or posting resources is not always enough and it is much better to discuss these with friends. If you are like me and don't have



## Language Learning is for everyone!

friends who love language learning like you do then we have also created a Facebook group for that purpose.

There you will find a large community of active and friendly members discussing all of their favorite (and not so favorite) resources and general chat. I am frequently active in the group and have already made a lot of new friends through it.

### It is still evolving

When I started the site just over 2 months ago, it was a little pet project that I put together very very quickly. I thought a few people would visit and could maybe get some benefit from it.

I didn't for a second expect the response that I got. Over 3000 people visited the site in the first month alone and this is steadily growing. This tells me that there is a definite need for it.

I am a web developer as my day job so I love doing this sort of thing. I already have a lot of ideas to make the site even better and have been discussing these openly with the group. I plan to keep the site in constant development and continually add new features.

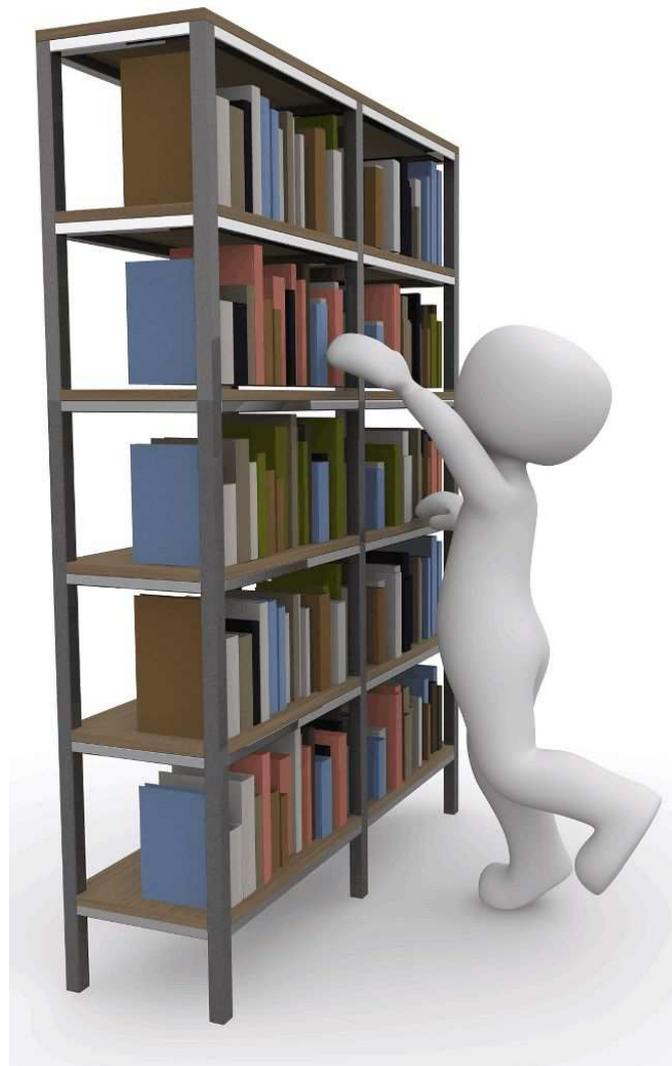
It may sound really cheesy but I already feel like this is no longer just mine, it belongs to everyone in the community and to everyone contributing to the site. I am just the guy that writes the code to make it work.

And the beauty of it all - absolutely everyone is welcome. Whether you know ten languages or just one, it doesn't matter; if you love language learning then I wholeheartedly invite you to come along and join both the site and the group.

We won't ask you for any money, we won't try to sell you anything. All we want is your opinion and your friendship - come join us!

**PT**

*Gary McCann is the founder of the [Language Learning Library \(languagelearninglibrary.com\)](http://languagelearninglibrary.com), a community based site that allows you to find, share, rate and review language learning resources. Like us on our [Facebook page](#) or come [join our group](#).*



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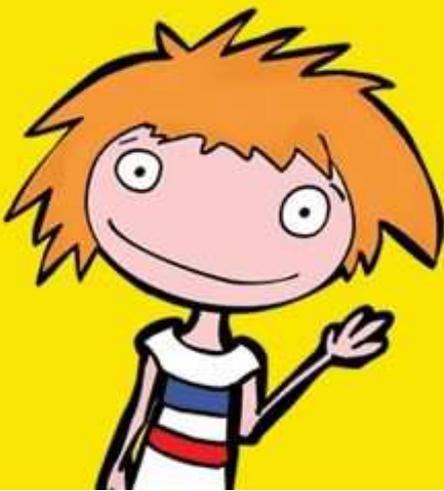
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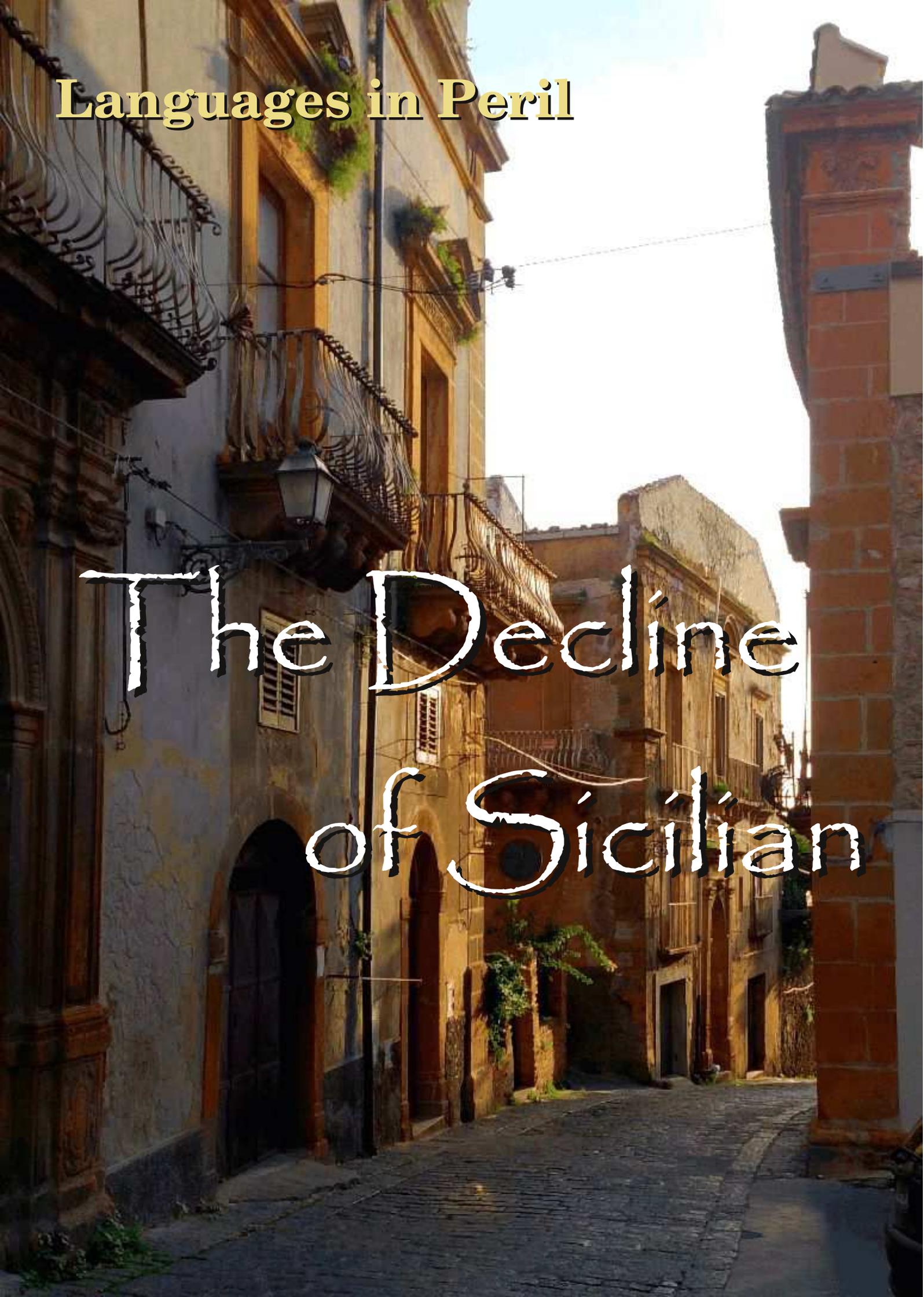
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Languages in Peril

The Decline  
of Sicilian



Off the coast of what most would call the “toe” of Italy is the island of Sicily. Its official language is Italian, like the rest of Italy, but it also has its own language, Sicilian, which is in danger of completely dying out, despite being spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of Sicily (around 5 million) and by emigrants in other countries.

Sicilian is a Romance language, like Italian, and is distinct enough from Italian to be recognized as a separate language. However, it is not recognized as an official language, even in the region it is named for, but it is officially recognized in the municipal statutes of a few Sicilian towns, meaning the locals accept it as official even if the rest of the country does not. It is supposed to be protected and promoted under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, but while Italy has signed this treaty, the Italian Parliament has not ratified it.

### History

Sicily is the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and can trace its inhabitants to three tribes as far back as 8000 BCE: the *Sicani*, the *Elymians*, and the *Sicels*. It is the Sicels which the name “Sicily” eventually came from, even though they were not the only people to inhabit the island. Of the three, only the Sicels were Indo-European, and their language was probably closely related to that of the Romans who came later.

In fact, over a dozen bodies of people of inhabited the island through the centuries, including the Phoenicians, ancient Greeks, Romans, Ostrogoths, Byzantine Greeks, Moors, Normans, Swabians, Spaniards, Austrians, and, of course, the Italians. Most of these groups contributed their own linguistic influences to the region.

The Phoenicians were the next to arrive after the initial trio had settled, arriving around 10th century BCE, to be replaced two centuries later by the ancient Greeks. While we often talk about the Romance languages being most influenced by the Romans in the form of Latin, it is Greek which probably had the most influence over Sicilian. The Romans did not arrive until relatively later, in 3rd century BCE.

During the Roman occupation after the end of the First Punic War (261 BCE), vulgar



Latin was the primary language spoken the troops there, and their mingling with the existing people affected the language, but only in some regions. The majority of the regions were still speaking Greek. This fragmentation had caused linguists to view Sicilian as a neo-Latin language, meaning it did not descend directly from Latin.

After the Romans, it was the Ostrogoths (the eastern branch of who would later be the Goths) who occupied Sicily from 476 to 535, although their short time there left little impression on the Sicilian language.

The other groups mentioned previously ruled the Kingdom of Sicily for varying lengths of time over the centuries so that by 1000 CE, it was a mix of small states and principalities with various languages and religions. During this time, it was controlled by Saracens (people who lived in desert areas around the Roman province of Arabia, but not Arabs) so that even Arabic had an effect on Sicilian.

Then around 1061, two Southern Italy adventurers, Roger of Hauteville and Robert Guiscard (brothers, despite the names), attempted to take over Sicily. The conquest took 30 years, during which time Robert died, and Latin, along with Normand (for the brothers

### Today

Despite the large number of Sicilian speakers, it still remains a minority language in its own home. While authors sometimes use Sicilian, most of the Sicily population is only literate in Italian. The younger generation is not learning the language and it is not being taught in the schools.

Even sadder, Sicilian immigrants often find that the words and phrases their grandparents taught them are no longer correct, since the language has changed that much in just the last century. While this makes for an interesting situation for linguists, in which they get to study an older form of the language outside of its place of origin, it only furthers the demise of the language, since even the remaining speakers are divergent. **PT**



The fresco "Roger of Sicily Receiving The Keys of the City" (1830) by Giuseppe Patania, showing Roger of Hauteville (who became Roger of Sicily I) being rewarded.

were of Norman descent), altered the Sicilian language further.

The mixing of the languages makes it difficult to trace the origins of each word. Sometimes, a word might have come almost directly from one of the prehistoric tribes, or it might have come from one of the other later languages who had been influenced similarly. Also, a word might seem to come from Greek, but exactly which period of the Greek language is unsure, or even if it is actually came from another language which was influenced by Greek.

Even with the mixing, there are still some Sicilian words which could have only come from the prehistoric tribes or some other language group not normally associ-

ated with Sicilian origins. This makes Sicilian an important language to look at when trying deduce what the earliest Indo-European languages may have looked like.



Modern day Palermo, the capital of Sicily



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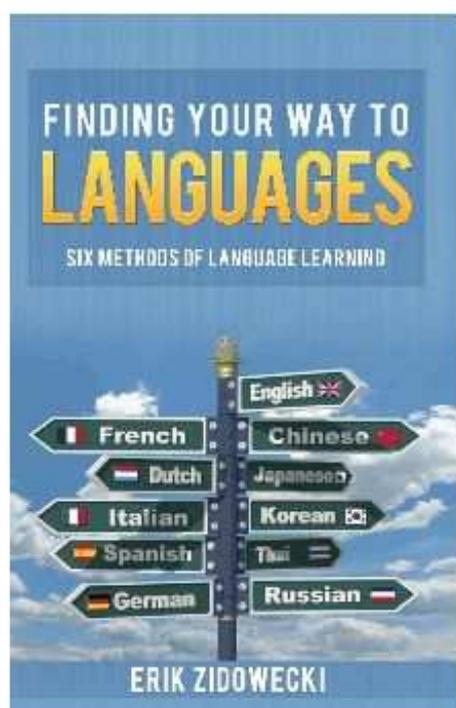
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Since each person learns in a different way, is no method that works the best for everyone. This book is designed for those that don't yet know what their way is. It examines six common methods of studying a language: through audio, like audio courses and podcasts; by books, ranging from phrasebooks to full textbooks; classes, with a teacher and other students; software, using computer programs to help train you; internet, utilising the potential of some of the other methods on a global scale; immersion, in which a person is completely surrounded by the language and must learn it to survive.

This book won't teach you any secrets, any overnight paths to fluency. What it will give you is a solid understanding of what the strengths and weaknesses are of each approach, allowing you, the reader, to find your own way to languages.

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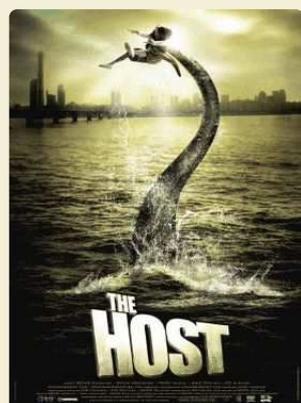


# Adventures in the Land of Maybe

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**The Host**  
 2h  
 (R) Drama / Horror / Sci-Fi  
 30 March 2007 (USA)

Country: South Korea  
 Language: Korean / English

*The film is actually a combination of comedy and horror, with the humour coming mainly from Gang-doo and his ability to screw up basically any situation.*

When I selected this month's film, *The Host*, I made two mistakes.

The first mistake was in not realizing it was listed as a horror film. I avoid those because the films that I grew up with which were labelled that way were full of cheap scares (a person gets nervous, then is suddenly startled by another person, rather than something horrific) and messy deaths (people being mutilated with blood flying everywhere). Such films as "Halloween" and "Nightmare on Elm Street" were filled with teens getting murdered in gross ways, making them more of what I called "gore" films.

Fortunately, this film was more in line with what I do like: a rampaging monster terrorizing the local population. These are especially good when you are frustrated with people in general, as you can cheer for the monster.

The second mistake was in seeing that it was from South Korea and thinking it would be a silly low-budget production with the creature being someone in a foam suit.

As it turns out, South Korea is very good at producing high quality films. This was shown to me in the first twenty minutes when we get to see the creature. Most horror films like to hide the monster

for most of the story, only allowing the audience quick partial glimpses of it, while they spend the rest of the film building up tension for an actual confrontation. I find those situations to be rather boring and anti-climatic, because no matter how good the monster is, it never seems to match up to what you have been imagining.

However, *The Host* wastes no time in showing you a full sized monster running amok, out in the open during daylight. Moreover, while it is a computer generated creature, it feels natural and moves with an amazing smoothness and speed. When we know how bad the creature is from the start, then we can enjoy seeing more encounters with it, rather than just hoping for something more.

Another treat is that this film actually had something of a plot, which isn't something always found in a horror flick.



Gang-doo and Hyun-seo watching Nam-joo in an archery tournament on television.



Watch out! Hyun-seo is about to be snatched up by the monster.

The main characters are the Park family, who essentially run a small snack shop on the shore of the Han River. The head of the family is Hie-Bong (Grandpa / Father), and it is his shop. He has three children: Gang-doo, who is supposed to help run the shop but tends to avoid doing anything; Nam-il, the college educated son turned alcoholic; and Nam-joo, the daughter who is a competitive archer. There is also Gang-doo's daughter, Hyun-seo.

We start out first a few years earlier, in a laboratory, where a scientist is telling his assistant to empty dust-covered bottles of formaldehyde down the drain. The assistant complains that doing so is not only illegal but it will pollute the Han River which the drains go directly to, (Who would hook any drainage system directly into a river, especially one for a laboratory?) but he does it anyways, and there are dozens of bottles to be emptied. This setup is to explain that the creature is a result of pollution.

From there, we jump ahead to the present day where we meet Gang-doo, as he is sleeping at his clerk position in the snack shop. His disgusted father wakes him and gives him

another task to do, which he screws up before retreating to their living quarters in the shop with Hyun-seo, who has returned home from school. They start watching Nam-joo who is in an archery tournament on television. Hie-bong closes the shop so he can watch too, but he sends Gang-doo off to deliver an order to a customer in the park.

When Gang-doo goes to deliver the tray of food and beer, he finds a group of people staring at some huge creature hanging from under the bridge. They watch as it drops into the water and swims to where they are. On a whim, Gung-doo throws one of the cans of beer into the water, and the crowd is excited to see a pointed tail strike out and grab the can.

Naturally, they all start throwing things into the water now, recording the results on their video phones. At first the creature seems bored, but then it launches itself onto the shore and starts rampaging, running and trampling anyone in its path. Gang-doo, along with a tourist, manage to strike the monster with the concrete base of a sign a few times before, to Gang-doo's horror, the beast swallows the tourist.

During all this, Gang-doo's daughter wanders out of the shop, completely unaware of the carnage going on around her. Gang-doo grabs her hand while running, attempting to drag her away to safety, but she trips and when grabs at her hand again, he mistakenly grabs that of another young girl. He has left his daughter behind! When he realizes this, he turns and watches as the creature descends upon her. For some reason, rather than trample her, the monster grabs her with its long tail then leaps back into the river, taking her with it.



Warning to all tourists: When travelling abroad, stay away from rampaging monsters.



The creature taking a huge dive back into the river with Hyun-seo.

The government moves soldiers into the area, herding the survivors into a large auditorium, and pictures of those who died during the attack are placed at one end of the room. Gang-doo's brother and sister arrive, and the whole family mourns the loss of Hyun-seo.

But things are far from over. The government has determined that the creature is spreading a virus to anyone it touches, and Gang-doo is one who made contact with the creature. He is taken into quarantine, to be examined by scientists who are fearful of an epidemic being unleashed on the city.

During that time, he receives a call on his phone. It is Hyun-seo. She is alive! But she is trapped somewhere in the sewer, and her phone battery dies before she can give more details. Gang-doo and his family take it upon themselves to break out of quarantine and rescue her before the monster kills her.

The film is actually a combination of comedy and horror, with the humour coming mainly from Gang-doo and his ability to screw up basically any situation. At some points, I found the humour a little forced or a comic scene dragging on too long.

These were tolerated, however, because of some really excellent scenes of the creature. One scene which had me awed was watching the monster travelling under a bridge. It did this by first swinging on a beam with its front



Hyun-seo manages to let her family know she is still alive with her mobile phone.

legs as it latched its tail onto beams further along. It would then release its legs, swing through by its tail, then grab the next beam with its legs again. It gave the beast a completely unique means of travel, establishing it has a completely foreign entity.

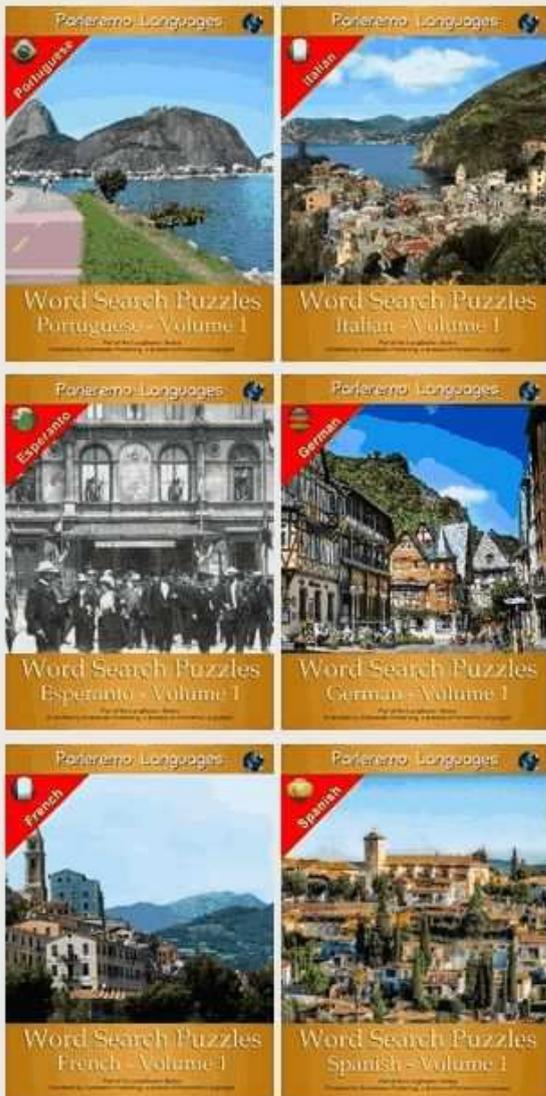
The language of the film is mostly Korean, with only a little English, so you aren't going to find a large mix to satisfy your polyglot passion. The comedy aspect might also not be to your taste if you are looking for a completely serious horror flick.

Given those caveats, if you have any interest at all in creature movies, I would highly recommend *The Host*. It is a very well done and entertaining piece of cinema, whether you cheer for the humans or the monster. **PT**



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## Where Are You?

# Where Are You?

This city sits besides a river and is the second largest city of its country. It was named for a leader of the country, then renamed twice before resuming its original name, which it used when it was the capital. It is the most westernised city of its country and is the northernmost city in the world.

The fortress and town which the city was born from were created in 1611. A leader, seeking to expand the sea trade and power, captured the city in 1703 and built his own fortress there. The city was built up for many years, at the cost of the lives of tens of thousands of serfs, before becoming the new capital for the country.

While it started out being built sporadically, a very formal layout was later developed and implemented. The leader used it as the new major port and studied ship building from the Dutch so he was able to create a large navy for it. He died in 1725, and while his attempts at modernizing his country caused much opposition in his country, the city he founded remains a testament to his greatness.

The name of the leader and the city seem related, as if the city were named after him. However, it was named after one of his patron saints, for which a citadel and cathedral were named. The name was changed the first time after the start of World War I to remove the German words related to it. It was renamed again, 10 years later, after the death of the current leader of the country, in dedication to him.

Today, it is still an important port, and parts of the city are designated UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including one of the largest art museums in the world.

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

**Last month's answer: Nara, Japan**





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LATG is also dedicated to promoting awareness for endangered languages around the world and the cultures they embody. A language loses its last speaker every two weeks. Without proper documentation the knowledge and history contained within these words will be lost forever.

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# Book Look

## Italian Short Stories for Beginners

by Olly Richards

Language: Italian

Item Rating: ★★★★★

This month I look at the book *Italian Short Stories for Beginners*, by polyglot Olly Richards, who runs the very successful blog *I Want to Teach You a Language*.

The subtitle is “8 Unconventional Short Stories to Grow Your Vocabulary and Learn Italian the Fun Way!”, so it sounds like Olly is indeed working to live up to this blog's name.

*Italian Short Stories* is available through Amazon as both a Kindle and printed book. The printed book is 6 x 9 inches (15.24 x 22.86 centimetres) and 286 pages.

I am a firm believer in process of learning a language through reading, so this book was instantly appealing. It is a natural process we use throughout our entire lives, increasing our vocabulary even in our own language through our intake of literature. Combining that with vocabulary lists specifically designed to focus on what we need to learn, and you've got a great learning resource.

The primary problem with developing stories for learning is keeping them interesting while also keeping them simple. The grammar structures need to be repeated for the best retention, verb tenses need to at least start out easy, and there should be a general avoidance of cramming too many new hard words together at once.

I am pointing this out because too many people seem to want fine literature coming out of a beginner's story. That's like expecting Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham* to be comparable to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

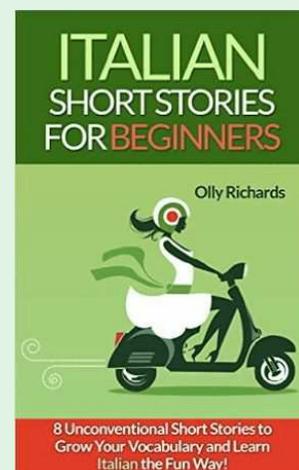
Olly manages to keep the stories interesting and useful, and the format for the book is constant and done in the style of many learning books, with first a reading (each story is broken into smaller “chapters”), a summary of the contents, a list of vocabulary list from the story you should focus on, and a selection of questions to test your comprehension.

The one thing I would warn against is that, despite the title, I don't think these books are quite for “beginners”. After the first several pages of advice on learning and how to use the book, the rest is, with the exception of the translations of the vocabulary words, all in Italian.

If you are a complete beginner, then you will likely need a dictionary to look up the words that are not explained. Also, the book is a collection of stories and vocabulary, like it says. This means that it doesn't contain explanations of grammar rules. This is a supplemental book for studying and a way to better apply your learning, not a complete course.

I enjoyed the book, and while I reviewed the Kindle version, I am thinking about getting a printed copy.

If you like the idea but are not interested in learning Italian, Olly offers similar books for Spanish, German, and Russian. **PT**





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# Basic Guide to Hungarian

Hungarian is a Finno-Ugric language, spoken mainly in Hungary. While it is one of the official languages of the European Union, it is one of the few languages of Europe not part of the Indo-European family. Here are some simple words and phrases in Hungarian for your language sampling pleasure.



<b>Good morning.</b>	Jó reggelt.
<b>Good afternoon.</b>	Jó napot.
<b>Good night.</b>	Jó éjszakát.
<b>Hello.</b>	Szia.
<b>How are you?</b>	Hogy vagy?
<b>Fine, thank you.</b>	Köszönöm, jól.
<b>What is your name?</b>	Mi a neved?
<b>My name is ...</b>	A nevem ...
<b>Nice to meet you.</b>	Örvendek. (lit. "How do you do?")
<b>Goodbye</b>	Viszlát
<b>Yes</b>	Igen
<b>No</b>	Nem
<b>Please.</b>	Kérem.

**Thank you.**

Köszönöm.

**You're welcome.**

Szívesen.

**I do not understand.**

Nem értem.

**Where is the toilet?**

Hol van a mosdó?

**Excuse me.**

Elnézést.

**I beg your pardon!**

Bocsánatodért kérek!

**I don't speak Hungarian.**

Nem beszélek magyarul.

**I speak a little Hungarian.**

Beszélek egy kicsit magyarul.

**Do you speak English?**

Beszélsz angolul?

**Help!**

Segítség!

**Look out!**

Vigyázz!

**Have a nice day.**

Szép napot.



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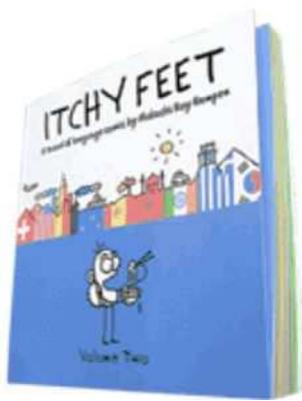
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## General Language

### RhinoSpike: Foreign Language Audio on Demand

RhinoSpike is an online language learning community tool that lets users around the globe connect and exchange foreign language audio files. Get any foreign language text read aloud for you by a native speaker!

<https://rhinospike.com/>



## Translators & Dictionaries

### 101 languages

This site lets you translate English phrases into many different languages. It also has courses in various topics.

<http://www.101languages.net/>



## Language Communities

### My Language Exchange

Find a partner at the online community and practice your second language (any language) with a native speaker who is learning your language. We host your online practice with lesson plans, text chat rooms and more.

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

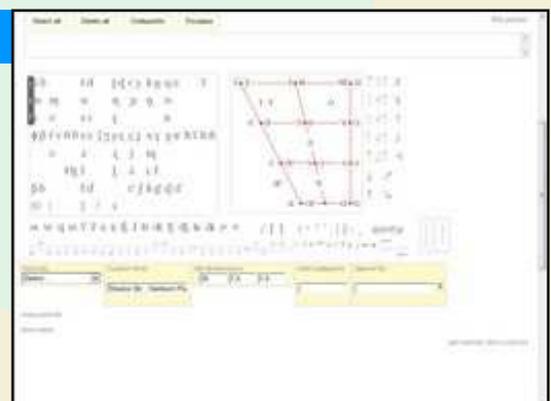


## Linguistics

### IPA character picker

Thanks to this site, it is very easy to write IPA symbols. You have several variants: either the lists you know from tables (according to the location of sound creation) or a real IPA keyboard or a big list of all available symbols.

<http://rshida.net/scripts/pickers/ipa/#main>



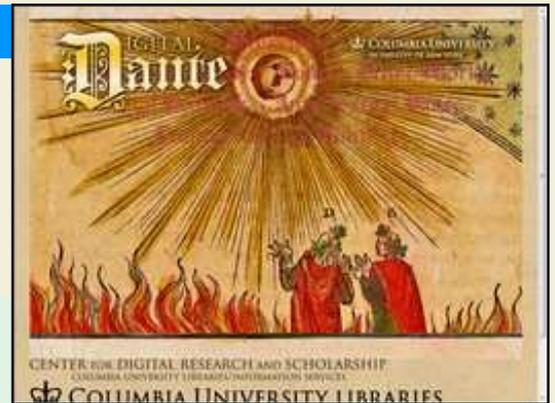
## Specific Language

### Digital Dante

The works of Dante, in Italian, with English translations for some of the works.

<http://digitaldante.columbia.edu/>

*Italian*



### Virtual Persian

A great site that teaches Persian up to an intermediate level. It has audio and dialogues. This is a very useful site for Persian learners.

<http://www.nyu.edu/pages/gsasweb/dept/mideast/virtualpersian/index.html>

*Farsi*



## Newspapers & Magazines

### De Volkskrant

The largest quality newspaper in the Netherlands inspires daily with the latest news, background information, opinion, and art & culture.

<http://www.volkskrant.nl/>

*Dutch*



### Kid HK Magazine

Children's magazine from one of the biggest media networks in South Korea.

<http://kids.hankooki.com/>

*Korean*



### Letter From the Editor

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Images:** Petey: Danke

### Language and Power: The Hidden Struggle

**Writer:** Olivier Elzingre

**Images:** Janet Burgess: Talking people

Petey: Adult lecture (title); Speaker and crowd silhouette; Mother and child at beach; Mother and daughter; Man at podium; Teacher in front of class;

### 4 Ways To Learn Through Reading

**Writer:** Teddy Nee

**Images:** Petey: Woman on grass reading (title); Babies reading; Library; Dictionary entry; Girl writing notes; Girl on couch reading; Woman reading electric device; Stacks of books; Girl reading books at shelves;

### Language Learning is for everyone!

**Writer:** Gary McCann

**Images:** Gary McCann: LLL Logo

Petey: Word grid (title); Man with globe; Trio; Man at bookcase;

### Languages in Peril - The Decline of Sicilian

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Images:** Kemeki: Street of Sicily (splash page)

TUBS: Italy map showing Sicily

Mattaurizio: Modern Palermo

Petey: Roger Receiving The Keys Of Palermo

**Sources:**

- "Sicilian language" Wikipedia <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian\\_language](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicilian_language)>
- "The Sicilian Language" life in italy <<http://www.lifeinitaly.com/tourism/sicily/sicilian-language.asp>>
- "Sicily" Wikipedia <<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sicily>>

### At The Cinema - The Host

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

**Sources:**

- "The Host" Internet Movie Database <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0468492/>>

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### Where Are You?

**Writer:** Sonja Krüger

**Images:** Petey: Mystery image

### Book Look

**Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

# LearnLangs.com



**Basic Guide to Hungarian****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki**Images:** Petey: Flag; City on river**At A Glance****Writer:** Erik Zidowecki

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Gary McCann

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