

10 Languages

Reading

Before reading

1 Discuss these questions.

- 1 What is your first language?
Can you speak more than one language?
- 2 How many languages are spoken in your country?
- 3 Do you know the names of any languages from different countries?
Do you know what languages people speak in India?

2 Read and listen.

voices of India

India has an incredible number of different languages. There are 22 major languages and over 1,600 **regional** dialects or varieties of those languages. Hindi is the official language of India and has more than 250 million speakers, but many people don't speak the official language at all.

Traditionally, the language that people learnt and spoke **depended on** where they lived. For example, people who lived in the Assam region of India spoke Assamese, though now people there may speak Hindi or Bengali, or even English!

Some of the Indian languages are extremely old. One of the earliest known written **scripts** in the world came from India. It is called Harapan and it has pictures like Egyptian **hieroglyphs**. The problem is that nobody can read or understand Harapan today.

Sanskrit is also an ancient language. Some of the written stories in Sanskrit are more than 5,000 years old. But Sanskrit is almost a **dead language** as few people actually speak it today - there are only around 200 thousand people who can speak Sanskrit well.

These days, English is very **widely** spoken, especially in government and education, and it is sometimes called the **working language** of India. Although people have many different mother tongues, English is often the second language which is **acquired** once formal education begins.

But English is not the dominant language in every **aspect** of Indian life. In homes across the country, hundreds of very old dialects are being passed on from **generation** to generation. Outside the home, films are being produced, and newspapers and books are being written in all the major languages, and over 50 languages are taught in schools.

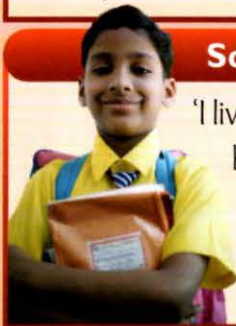
So is it difficult having all these different languages?
We talked to some school children in India to find out.

Haresh, 11, Kashmir

'I'm from Kashmir. I speak Urdu because it's the official language here – most of my classes are taught in Urdu. I also speak Kashmiri because my parents speak it at home to me, and I speak a little English at school. I think learning languages is important because it's important to **communicate** with people.'



Samir, 12, Delhi



'I live in a big city called Delhi. It is really multilingual here. I speak Punjabi at home because my older **relatives** don't understand any other language. Some of my friends speak different languages at home. I'm learning English at school, but I also learn lots of English by watching English cartoons on TV, so I think it's fun to learn other languages.'

Mala, 11, Rajasthan

'I live in Rajasthan and Hindi is my first language. I'm learning English at school. My parents speak a dialect called Malvi. I speak this a little too, but I can't write anything in Malvi. I prefer speaking and writing in Hindi. I really like watching Hindi films! I'm glad I can speak different languages.'



Vocabulary

3 Match the words from the text to the definitions.

- 1 aspect (noun) one part of a situation
- 2 _____ (noun) types of writing
- 3 _____ (verb) learnt or got
- 4 _____ (adjective) coming from a certain part of the country
- 5 _____ (noun) people in your family
- 6 _____ (adverb) across a large area
- 7 _____ (noun) a language not spoken by anyone any more
- 8 _____ (verb) share and exchange information or ideas with others
- 9 _____ (noun) pictures or symbols used in some ancient writing
- 10 _____ (verb) varied according to a certain situation
- 11 _____ (noun) a language used to communicate in formal situations
- 12 _____ (noun) grandparents, parents or children, for example

Reading comprehension

4 Match the questions and answers.

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 How many major languages are there in India? | a zero |
| 2 How many dialects are there in India? | b two hundred thousand |
| 3 How many people in India speak Hindi? | c three |
| 4 How many people can speak Harapan? | d twenty-two |
| 5 How many people can speak Sanskrit? | e fifty |
| 6 How many languages can Mala write in? | f one thousand, six hundred |
| 7 How many languages does Haresh speak? | g two |
| 8 How many languages are taught in Indian schools? | h two hundred and fifty million |

5 Circle the correct words to make true sentences.

- The official language of India is Hindi / English.
- There are more than 1,600 *languages* / *dialects* spoken in India.
- The language people spoke used to vary according to *religion* / *region*.
- Harapan is a *dead* / *working* language.
- About *five thousand* / *two hundred thousand* people can speak Sanskrit.
- People often learn English as a second language at *home* / *school*.
- Ancient dialects are passed onto children from their *parents* / *teachers*.
- Books and films in India are in *English only* / *many different languages*.

6 Match the sentences with the pictures.

I love watching English cartoons. My family speak Punjabi. I speak Hindi.
I learn English and Urdu at school. I live in a multilingual city. I speak Urdu.
I like watching Hindi films. My family speak Kashmiri. I can speak Malvi.



Haresh



Mala



Samir

7 Discuss these questions with a partner or with your class.

- Do you think it's important for parents to pass on their mother tongue to their children, or do you think children should only speak the official language?
- Why do you think so many people around the world learn English in school?

Hello Sharifa,

My name's Carmen. I'm 12 years old and I live in California in the US.

My teacher gave me your email address. She told me that you wanted to write to someone in America to practise your English.

Let me tell you about California. Many people from different countries live here. My parents are from Puerto Rico, so I speak Spanish. Of course I speak English too and I'm learning French at school. Some of my friends speak different languages at home, but we speak English to each other. How about you?

In my free time, I like going to my friends' houses. We usually watch movies and eat lots of popcorn! Sometimes we go to our favourite fast food restaurant for burgers.

Write soon and tell me about you and your country!

From,

Carmen

When you write an email to a friend ...

- Start with a **friendly greeting** and the person's name:

Hello /Hi Sharifa,

- Use **friendly, informal expressions**:

Let me tell you ... / Tell me about ... / How about you? / Write soon!

- Separate different subjects by using **paragraphs**: personal details / why you're writing / where you live / your family / the languages you speak / your free time activities

- End by saying who the email is **from**:

From, Carmen

8 Number the parts of the email in the correct order.

- I speak Arabic, but I'm also learning French and English at school. I'm not very good at French. How about you? _____
- From, Sharifa _____
- Thanks for your letter! Let me tell you a little about me. I'm Sharifa and I'm from Jordan. I live in Amman with my parents and grandparents. _____
- Hello Carmen, 1 _____
- Hope you write soon! _____

9 Write your own email to reply to Carmen. Use the ideas above to help you.