

LANGUAGE

FAMILIES

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Introduction

Language is the system of human communication using words, written and spoken, and particular ways of combining them (syntax), and includes any such system employed by a community, a nation, etc. Regarding this human communication, there are several main language families, including:

- 1) Indo-European languages
- 2) Afro-Asiatic languages (Hamito-Semitic Languages)
- 3) Sino-Tibetan languages
- 4) Austro-Asiatic languages
- 5) Tai languages
- 6) Austronesian languages
- 7) Altaic languages
- 8) Japanese language
- 9) Korean language
- 10) Palaeosiberian languages
- 11) Uralic languages
- 12) Niger-Congo languages
- 13) Eskimo-Aleut languages
- 14) Australian Aboriginal languages
- 15) North American Indian languages
- 16) Mexican and Central American Indian languages
- 17) South American and Caribbean Indian languages
- 18) Burushaski Language
- 19) Dravidian languages

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1. Indo-European Languages

The Indo-European languages are a family of languages that were spoken originally throughout Europe, Asia Minor (present-day Asian Turkey), Iran, northern and central India, and as far eastward as Chinese Turkistan.

Following the period of European colonial expansion, which began in the late 15th century, modern Indo-European languages (notably English, and the Romance languages of French, Spanish, and Portuguese) spread to much of the rest of the world, including the Americas, Australasia, and the continent of Africa.

Virtually all the modern languages of Europe belong to the Indo-European language group - the only exceptions being Basque, Finnish, Hungarian, and Turkish. Hittite is the earliest

known Indo-European language, and this was spoken in Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Syria in the second and first millennia BC.

The Indo-European language family-members share characteristics such as basic vocabulary and grammatical inflections. The parent language (proto-Indo-European) can be reconstructed by comparing the daughter languages, especially the ancient ones. Consequently, it appears that proto-Indo-European was spoken some time before 3000 BC, and split up during the subsequent millennia.

There are ten branches to the Indo-European language family, which are listed below in order of antiquity:

- 1. Anatolian** (Anatolia (modern Turkey) and Syria)
Hittite, Luwian, Lycian, Lydian, and Palaic (all extinct)
- 2. Indo-Iranian** (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, and Tajikistan)
 - i. Indic (Indo-Aryan)
Sanskrit, Prakrit (Maharastri, Shauraseni, and Pali), *Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Assamese, Gujarati, Marathi, Punjabi/Panjabi, Pashtu, Sindhi, Oriya, Nepali*, and Romany
 - ii. Iranian
Avestan, Old Persian, Middle Persian, Parthian, 'Eastern Group', modern *Persian* (Farsi), Pashto, Tajik, and *Kurdish*
- 3. Hellenic** (Greece)
Greek
- 4. Italic** (Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Switzerland, Andorra, Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, North Africa, Canada, Romania and Moldova)
 - i. Oscan-Umbrian
Oscan (survives only in inscriptions), and Umbrian (extinct)
 - ii. Latin-Faliscan
Romance languages and derivatives: *Spanish, Portuguese, French, Italian, Romanian*, Rhetic, Catalan, Galician, Sardinian, Occitan, Dalmatian (extinct), Arumanian, and Megleno
- 5. Germanic** (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, England, Belgium, Holland, Friesland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and South Africa)
 - i. East Germanic
Gothic (extinct)
 - ii. North Germanic
 - a. West Scandinavian
Icelandic, Faeroese, and Norwegian
 - b. East Scandinavian
Danish, and Swedish
 - iii. West Germanic
 - a. Anglo-Frisian
English, and Frisian (closest relative of English)
 - b. Netherlandic-German
German, Dutch-Flemish, Yiddish, and Afrikaans
- 6. Armenian** (Armenia, Turkey, and Iran)
Eastern Armenian, and Western Armenian
- 7. Tocharian** (now extinct - once spoken in what is now northern Chinese Turkistan)
- 8. Celtic** (Ireland, Scotland, Isle of Man, Wales, Brittany, and Cornwall)
 - i. Goidelic (Q-Celtic)
Irish Gaelic, Scots Gaelic, and Manx Gaelic

- ii. Brythonic (P-Celtic)
Welsh, Cornish (extinct), Breton, and Gaulish

9. Balto-Slavic (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Russia, Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, (Central and Eastern Europe))

- i. Slavic
 - a. South Slavic
Serbo-Croatian (including Serbian), Slovene, Macedonian, and Bulgarian
 - b. West Slavic
Czech, Slovak, *Polish*
 - c. East Slavic
Russian, *Belarusian/Belorussian/Byelorussian*, *Ukrainian*
- ii. Baltic
Latvian/Lettish/Lett, Lithuanian, and Old Prussian (extinct)

10. Albanian (Albania and southern Yugoslavia)

- i. Northern
Gheg dialect
- ii. Southern
Tosk dialect

Friesland is a northern province of the Netherlands, bounded to the north by the Wadden Sea and to the south by Lake IJssel. Friesland's area is 3,357 sq. km. (1,297 sq. miles), and its population is +/-600,000. The capital of Friesland is Leeuwarden.

Frisian is the Germanic language of Friesland, as is the most closely related language to English. It has +/-400,000 speakers.

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2. Afro-Asiatic languages (Hamito-Semitic Languages)

Afro-Asiatic languages (Hamito-Semitic Languages) are a group of languages in North Africa, Morocco, northern Algeria, Libya, and Egypt, and in a large central-Saharan area in Niger, Mali, and southern Algeria. There are five main branches to the Afro-Asiatic languages:

1. Semitic (North Africa, Ethiopia, Arabian Peninsula, Middle East, Israel, Palestine, and Malta)

- i. Eastern
Akkadian, Babylonian, Sumerian, and Assyrian
- ii. Western
 - a. Central
Arabic, Maltese, Hebrew, Syriac, Phoenician (extinct), and Aramaic
 - b. South
Tigrinya, and *Amharic*

2. Ancient Egyptian (extinct)

Coptic (extinct)

3. Berber (North Africa, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania)

Numidian (ancient Libyan), Tuareg, Kabyle, Riff, and Schluh

4. Chadic (Central Sub-Saharan Africa to the west, south, and east of Lake Chad)

Hausa

5. Cushitic (Somalia, Ethiopia, northern Kenya and area spanning Egypt-Sudan border (between Nile and Red Sea)

i. Northern Cushitic
Beja

ii. Eastern Cushitic
Galla (Oromo), and Somali

iii. Southern Cushitic
iv. Western Cushitic (Omotic)
v. Central Cushitic

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3. Sino-Tibetan languages

Sino-Tibetan languages are the second largest group of languages in the world, with well over 1 billion speakers. It has two branches:

1. Sinitic (China, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan)
i. Chinese, modern Chinese, and *Mandarin*
ii. *Hakka*
iii. *Min*
iv. *Wu*
v. Yue
Cantonese

2. Tibeto-Burman (Tibet, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, northern India, Bangladesh) Tibetan, and *Burmese*

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4. Austro-Asiatic languages

Austro-Asiatic languages are a group of languages that are spoken in southeast Asia ('austro-' means 'south'), in an area stretching from north-eastern India across to Vietnam and Malaysia. The family consists of three branches:

1. Nicobarese (Nicobar Islands (Bay of Bengal)
Nicobar (closely related to Mon-Khmer)

2. Munda (north-east India)
Mundari, and Santali

3. Mon-Khmer (Myanmar (Burma), Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos)
Mon, Khmer/Kmer, and. *Vietnamese*

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5. Tai languages

Tai languages are a group of around sixty closely related languages spoken in Thailand and Laos, as well as in northern Myanmar (Burma) and Assam to the west, and northern Vietnam and southern China to the east. They are spoken by over 60 million people. The languages fall into three sub-groups:

Tai language (Thailand, Laos, northern Myanmar (Burma), Assam, northern Vietnam, southern China)
Siamese (Thailand)

- i. North
 Zhuang (southern China)
- ii. Central
- iii. South West
 Thai, and Lao

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6. Austronesian languages

Austronesian languages are a large group of languages spread over a huge area in the Indian and Pacific oceans. The central area in which they are spoken is Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines; they extend west to Madagascar, and east to New Zealand and the Pacific islands ('Austronesian' means 'southern islands'). Despite the large distances involved, the languages are all remarkably similar to each other, which makes internal sub-grouping difficult:

Malayo-Polynesian (Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Madagascar, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Taiwan, Papua)

- i. Western
 Fijian, Javanese, Malay-Indonesian, Tagalog, Sundanese, Cebuano, Malagasy, Madurese, and Filipino/Pilipino (based on Tagalog)
- ii. Eastern (Oceanic languages)
 Samoa, Tahitian, Tongan, Maori, and Hawaiian (close to extinction)

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7. Altaic languages

Altaic is a family of languages, named after the Altai Mountains (central Asia), which consists of three language-groups. It is not completely clear whether these three form a genetically related group (that is, are descended from one parent language), or whether they owe their undoubted similarities to centuries of contact and mutual influence:

Altaic (Turkey eastwards through Central Asia to north-west China and far into Siberia, Mongolia, Buryat, Kalmyk, Siberia to northern China)

- i. Turkic (30 languages, including:)
 Turkish, Azerbaijani, Uigur, Tatar, Azeri, Kazakh/Kazak, Kirghiz, Turkmen, and *Uzbek*
- ii. Mongolian (12 languages, including:)
 Mongol/Mongolian, Buryat/Buriat, Kalmuck/Kalmyk, and Khalkha
- iii. Manchu-Tungus (16 languages, including:)
 Manchu, and Tungus

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8. Japanese language

Japanese language, the language spoken by 123 million people in Japan. It is unclear what other languages Japanese is related to, and there has been considerable argument over this question. It seems to be distantly related to Korean, and many scholars now connect it with the Altaic group:

Japanese (Japan)

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9. Korean language

Korean language is the language spoken in North and South Korea by 64 million people. It is not closely related to any other language, but has been connected with Altaic by many scholars, and may be distantly related to Japanese:

- Korean** (North and South Korea)
 - i. North
 - Pyongyang dialect
 - ii. South
 - Seoul dialect

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10. Palaeosiberian languages

Palaeosiberian languages are a group of four very small languages which are not genetically related, but which are grouped together because of the similarities arising from extended contact and mutual influence. They once occupied large parts of Siberia and eastern Asia, but they were pushed to the periphery by other languages (notably Altaic and Russian), hence the name 'Palaeosiberian', which means 'old Siberian':

- Palaeosiberian** (Siberia and eastern Asia)
 - i. Luorawetlan (Chukchi-Kamchatkan) (5 languages, including:)
 - Chukchi
 - ii. Gilyuk (language isolate)
 - iii. Yeniseian
 - Ket
 - iv. Yukaghir

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11. Uralic languages

Uralic languages are a family of languages spoken over a large area of northern Europe and Asia. They stretch from northern Scandinavia and the Baltic region across the Ural Mountains into northern Asia and Siberia. Uralic has two branches:

- Uralic** (Russia, Siberia, northern Scandinavia, Baltic region, Ural Mountains, northern Asia)
 - i. Finno-Ugric
 - a. Finnic
 - Finnish (Suomi), and Estonian
 - b. Ugric
 - Hungarian* (Magyar), Mansi, and Khant
 - ii. Samoyedic (4 languages, including:)
 - Nenets

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12. Niger-Congo languages

Niger-Congo languages are the main language-group of the southern two-thirds of Africa, stretching as far north as Senegal on the west coast, and southern Kenya on the east coast. It is a vast and very diverse family, with over 1,000 languages and numerous dialects. Scholars

have divided Niger-Congo languages into six main groups that represent divisions that occurred over 5,000 years ago:

Niger-Congo (Africa) (over 1,000 languages, including:)

- i. Adamawa-Eastern (112 languages)
- ii. Benue-Congo (Niger-Kordofanian) (557 languages, including:
Bantu (southern half of Africa)
Bemba, Fang, Ganda, Kikuyu, Kongo, Lingala, Luba, Makua,
Mbundu, Ruanda, Rundi, Shona, Sindebele, Sotho, *Swahili*,
Swazi, Thonga, Tswana, Venda, Xhosa, and Zulu
- iii. Kwa (73 languages, including:
Yoruba, Akan, and *Igbo*
- iv. Mwande (26 languages)
- v. Voltaic (Gur) (79 languages, including:
Dogon
- vi. West Atlantic (43 languages, including:
Fulani

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13. Eskimo-Aleut languages

Eskimo-Aleut languages are a group of about ten languages spoken by 90,000 people in Greenland, northern Canada, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, and the Chukchi Peninsula of Siberia.

Eskimo-Aleut (Greenland, northern Canada, Alaska, the Aleutian Islands, and the Chukchi Peninsula of Siberia)

- Eskimo
- i. Yupik, Inupiaq, and Inuktitut
 - ii. Aleut

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14. Australian Aboriginal languages

Australian Aboriginal languages included around 200 languages that were spoken over the whole continent of Australia before colonisation. The languages, like their speakers, were disastrously affected by the European invasions, which started at the end of the 18th century. Fifty languages are now extinct, and around a hundred more will apparently soon be extinct; many of these are now remembered by just a few old people. This leaves perhaps fifty languages that have a good chance of survival. The number of speakers is estimated to be fewer than 50,000.

Australian Aboriginal (Australia) (200 languages, including:)

- i. North
- ii. Pama-Nyungan
Aranda

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15. North American Indian languages

North American Indian languages are languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of Canada and North America before the arrival of Europeans, who had a disastrous effect on

them. Fewer than half of the 300 languages that were originally spoken in North America has survived, and many are remembered now by just a few old people:

North American languages (Alaska and western Canada, and in a substantial island stretching over California, Arizona, New Mexico, centre and eastern coast of the USA, and southern Mexico)

- i. Na-Dene (34 languages, including:)
 - Navaho, and Apache

- ii. Northern Amerind
 - a. Almosan
 - Algonkian

 - b. Keres-Siouan
 - c. Penutian,
 - d. Hokan (28 languages)

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16. Mexican and Central American Indian languages

Mexican and Central American Indian languages are languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of Central America before the Spanish invasion of 1519. Most are still spoken, in spite of a dramatic fall in the number of speakers, but linguistic boundaries do not correspond with modern political borders. The region is a meeting-place for the language groups of North and South America. It is generally believed that the indigenous peoples of South America travelled there from the north via this narrow area, which is an argument in favour of the theory that most American Indian languages are related, however distantly.

Mexican Languages (Mexico, Central America from Guatemala to Panama)
Hokan, Penutian (includes: Yucatec, Quiche, Cakchiquel, Kekchi, and Mam),
Chibchan-Paezan

- i. Uto-Aztecan
 - Comanche, Hopi, and Aztec

- ii. Oto-Manguean (17 languages)
 - Otomi, Mixtec, and Zapotec

Central American languages (Meso-America - the isthmus joining North and South America, extending from Mexico to Colombia)

- i. Northern Amerind
- ii. Central Amerind
 - a. Uto-Aztecan
 - Comanche, Hopi, and Aztec

 - b. Oto-Manguean (17 languages, including:)
 - Otomi, Mixtec, and Zapotec

- iii. Chibchan-Paezan

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17. South American and Caribbean Indian languages

South American and Caribbean Indian languages are the languages spoken by the indigenous peoples of this region before the arrival of European (mainly Spanish and Portuguese) invaders. The task of classifying them into groups is difficult and controversial. The languages can be divided into four main groups, which may be distantly related to each other and to the Amerind families of North and Central America:

South American and Caribbean Indian languages (South America, and Caribbean)

- i. Chibchan-Paezan
- ii. Andean
 - Quechua
- iii. Equatorial-Tucanoan (50 languages)
- iv. Ge-Pano-Carib
 - Ge, Pano, and Carib

Caribbean languages (Caribbean islands and all over northern and central South America)

- i. Arawak
- ii. Tupi

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18. Burushaski Language

The Burushaski Language is a language spoken by the Burusho people living in the Gilgit territory of north-western Kashmir. Burushaski is a 'language isolate', not known to be related to any other language of the world.

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19. Dravidian languages

Dravidian languages are a group of languages spoken in southern India and northern Sri Lanka, though there are also isolated groups of speakers in north-eastern India and central Pakistan. With over 170 million speakers, this group is the fourth largest in the world. It consists of about twenty-five languages that can be divided into four sub-groups:

Dravidian languages (India and northern Sri Lanka, north-eastern India and central Pakistan)

Sinhalese (Sri Lanka)

- i. North-West
 - Brahui
- ii. North-East
 - Kurukh, and Malti
- iii. Central
 - Kui, and *Telugu*
- iv. Southern
 - Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada/Kanarese, and Tulu*

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Number of Speakers (millions) – Main Language groups

The following languages are noted in italics in the language families above.

Mandarin	907
English	456
Hindi	383
Spanish	362
Russian	293
Arabic	208
Bengali	189
Portuguese	177
Malay-Indonesian	148
Japanese	126
French	123
German	119
Urdu	96
Punjabi (Punjab, Pakistan, India)	89
Korean (Korea, China, Japan)	73
Telugu (Andhra Pradesh, SE India)	71
Marathi (Maharashtra, India)	67
Tamil (Tamil Nadu, India, Sri Lanka)	67
Cantonese (China, Hong Kong)	65
Wu (Shanghai Region, China)	64
Italian	63
Javanese (Java, Indonesia)	61
Vietnamese	61
Turkish	57
Min (SE China, Taiwan, Malaysia)	50
Thai	49
Swahili	46
Ukrainian	46
Polish	44
Kannada/Kanarese (S India)	43
Tagalog (Philippines)	43
Gujariti (WC India, S Pakistan)	39
Hausa (N Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon)	36
Malayalam (Kerala, India)	35
Persian (Iran, Afghanistan)	34
Hakka (SE China)	33
Burmese (Myanmar)	31
Oriya (C and E India)	31
Romanian	26
Sundanese (Sunda Strait, Indonesia)	25
Assamese (India, Bangladesh)	23
Dutch-Flemish (Netherlands, Belgium)	21
Pashtu (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran)	21
Serbo-Croatian	20
Yoruba (SW Nigeria, Zou, Benin)	19
Amharic (Ethiopia)	18
Igbo (Lower Niger, Nigeria)	17
Sindhi (SE Pakistan, W India)	17
Azerbaijani	15
Zhuang (S China)	15
Hungarian	14
Nepali (Nepal, NE India, Bhutan)	14
Cebuano (Bohol Sea, Philippines)	13
Fula (Cameroon, Nigeria)	13
Sinhalese (Sri Lanka)	13
Uzbek	13

Czech	12
Malagasy (Madagascar)	12
Greek	11
Afrikaans (South Africa)	10
Belarusian/Belorussian/Byelorussian	10
Kurdish (SW of Caspian Sea)	10
Madurese (Madura, Indonesia)	10
Oromo (W Ethiopia, N Keyna)	10

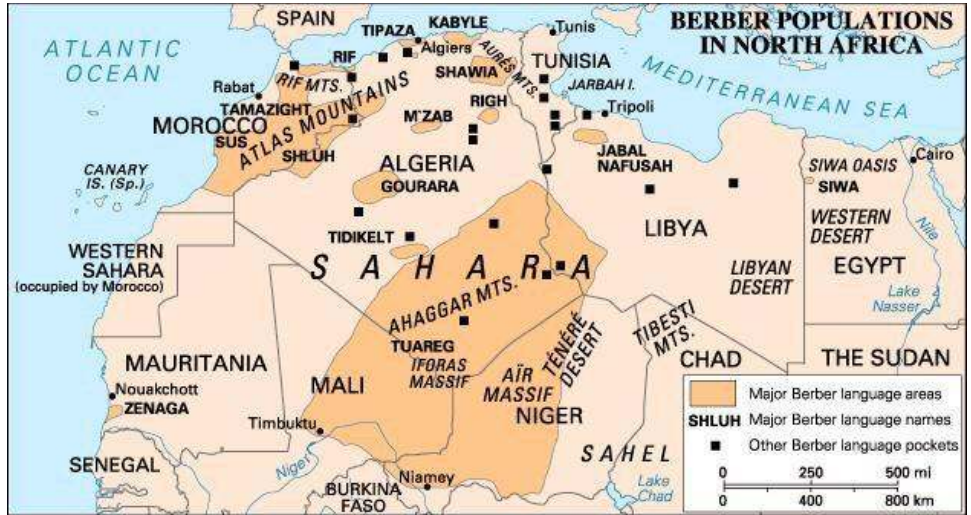
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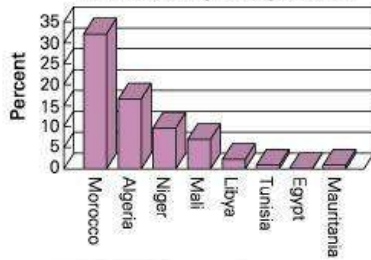
Appendix

Maps

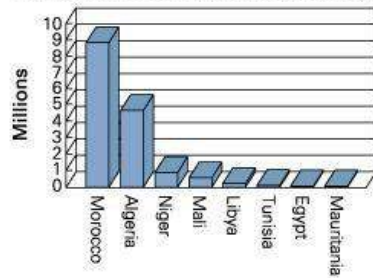
Berber Language



Berber Speakers as Percentage of a Country's Population

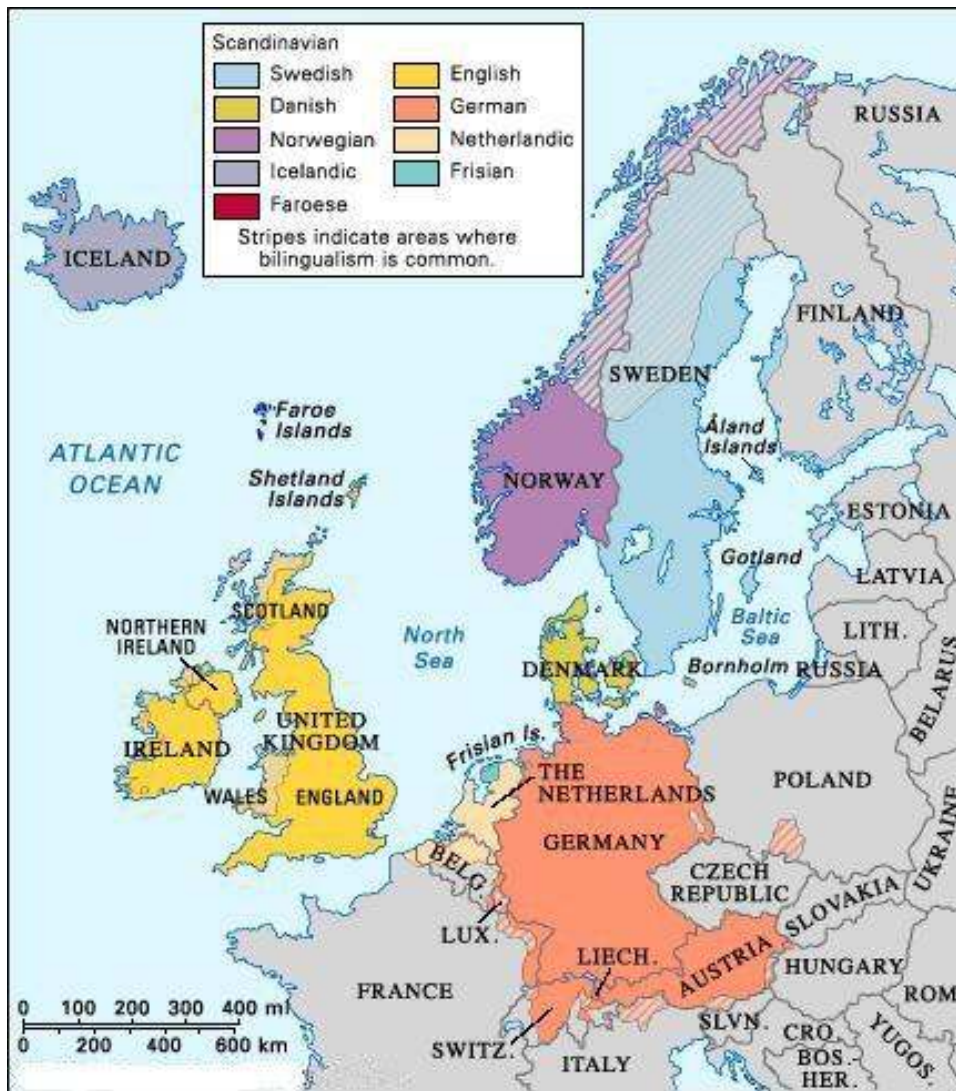


Berber Language Speakers Number of Berber Speakers (1995 estimates)



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English in Europe



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European Ethnic Culture



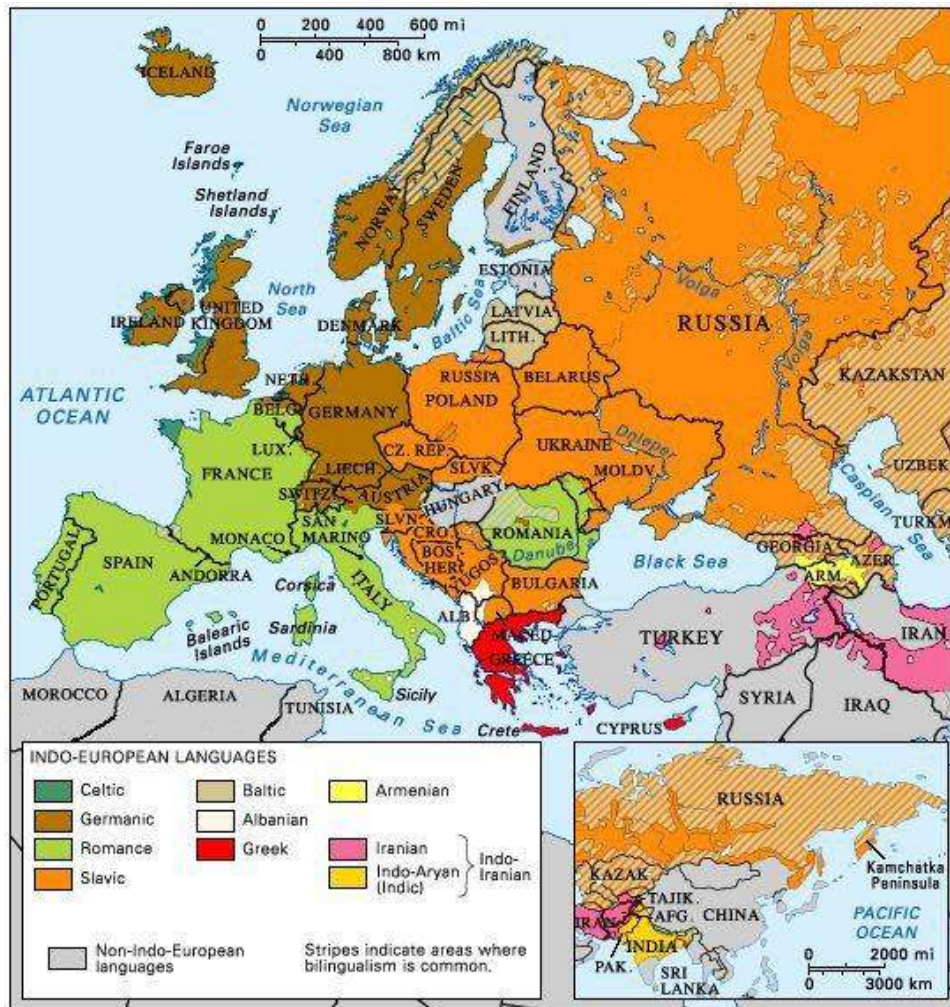
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Frisian Netherlandic German language



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Indo-Euro

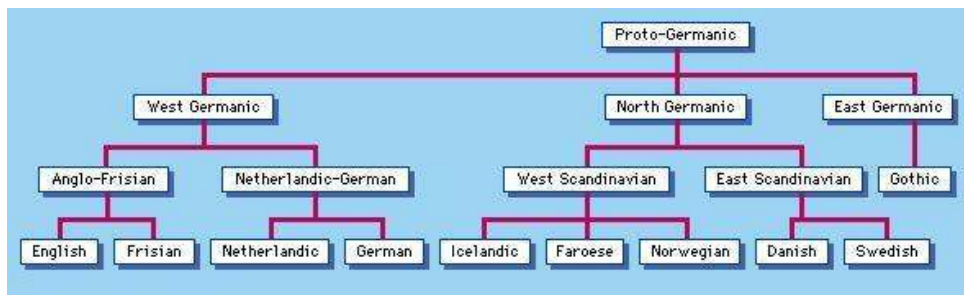


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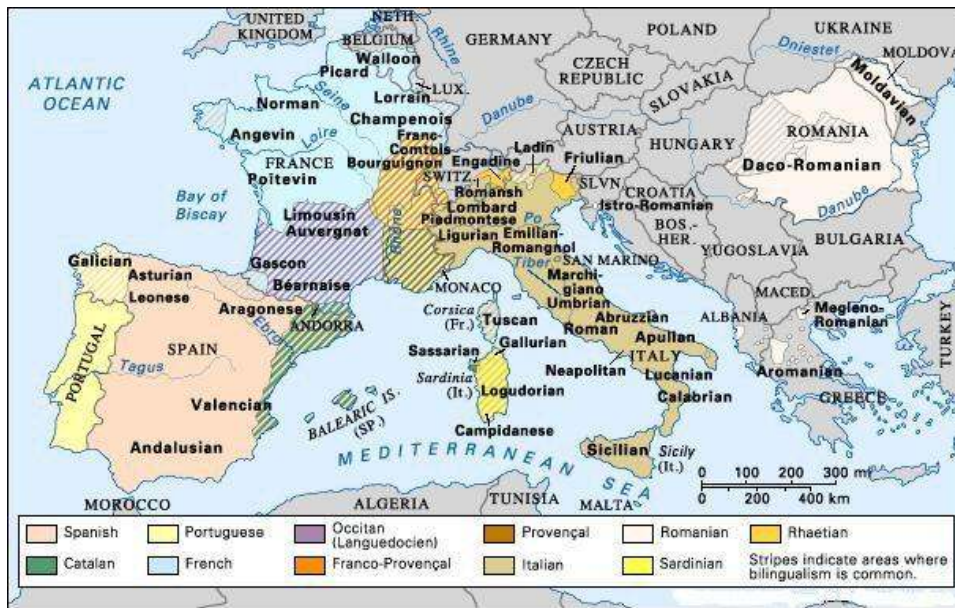
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Proto Germanic language



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Romance Languages



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Slavic languages



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Tai languages



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