



LANGUAGE

SJSU INTERNATIONAL HOUSE NEWSLETTER

**FROM ENGLISH TO JAPANESE. FROM THAI TO URDU.
EVERY RESIDENT AT I-HOUSE COMES SPEAKING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES.
LET'S HEAR THEM SPEAK.**

FALL 2017

SJSU | INTERNATIONAL HOUSE



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LANGUAGES IN THE I-HOUSE

ARABIC, ASL
 ASSYRIAN, BENGALI
 BURMESE/MYANMAR
 CANTONESE, DANISH
 ENGLISH, FRENCH
 GALICIAN, GERMAN
 GUJARATI, HINDI
 HOKKIAN, IGBO
 INDO, ITALIAN
 JAPANESE, KOREAN
 MALAY, MANDARIN
 MARATHI, PORTUGUESE
 PUNJABI, SANSKRIT
 SLOVENIAN, SPANISH
 SWEDISH, TAIWANESE
 THAI, URDU
 VIETNAMESE

THERE ARE 32 LANGUAGES
 KNOWN TOTAL!

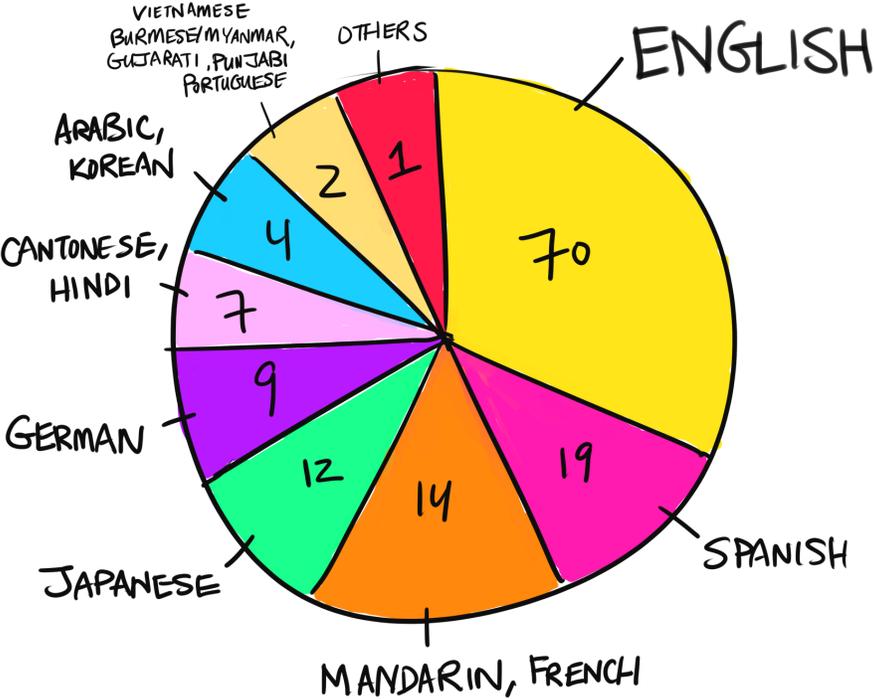
AFTER ENGLISH,
 SPANISH, FRENCH AND
 MANDARIN ARE THE MOST WELL
 KNOWN LANGUAGES.

THERE ARE 17 LANGUAGES ONLY
 KNOWN BY ONE PERSON EACH.

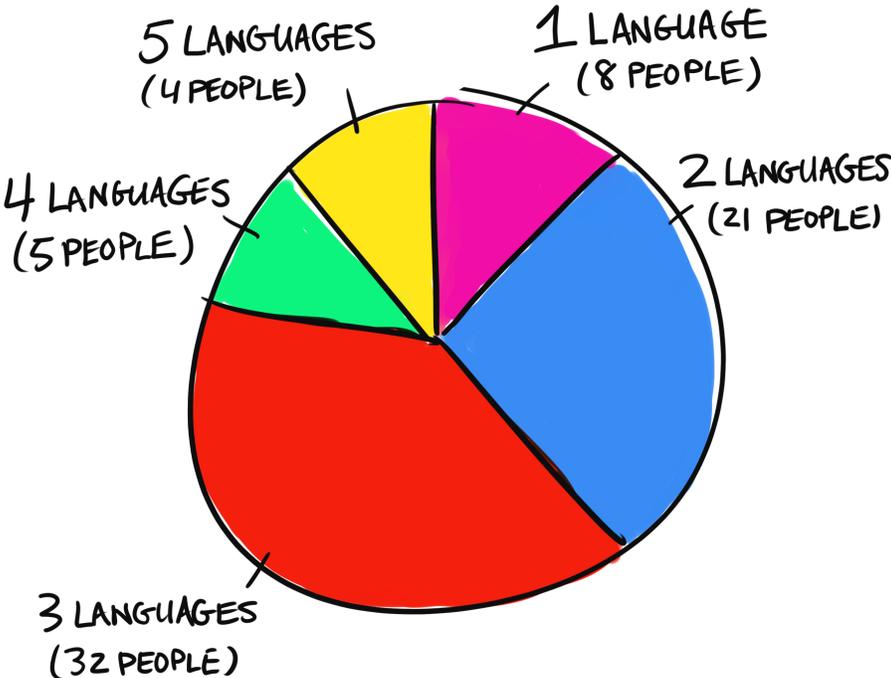
MOST PEOPLE KNOW AT LEAST 3
 LANGUAGES.

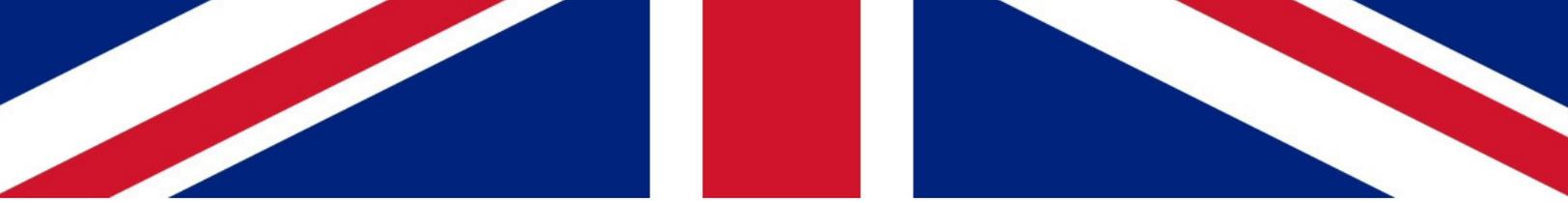
TALK ABOUT MULTILINGUAL!

HOW MANY PEOPLE IN THE I-HOUSE KNOW EACH LANGUAGE?



HOW MANY LANGUAGES DO PEOPLE KNOW IN THE I-HOUSE?



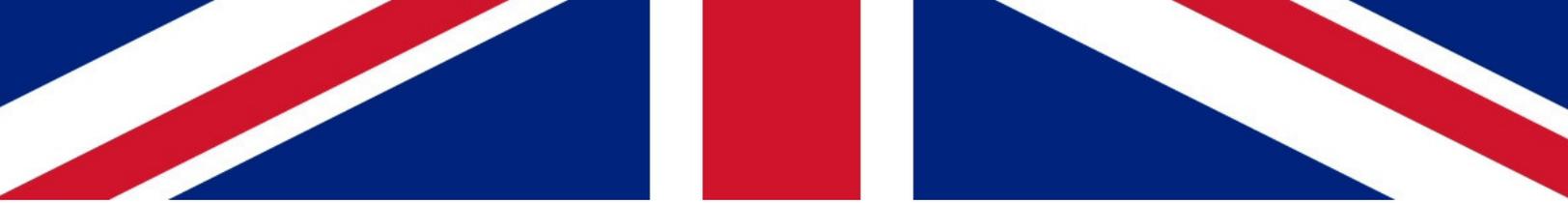


AMERICAN V. BRITISH ENGLISH: AND SOMETIMES

As a born American, raised Brit, I completely understand the differences between American and British English. They are different in so many ways. It's funny how one language could get so twisted that it sounds like a whole other language in and of itself. I'd assume that an outsider—someone whose first language isn't English—wouldn't notice much of a difference. Chances are, however, they learn to speak in British English rather than American English because it's considered sophisticated and 'proper'. In reality though, American English is becoming more and more globally recognized, at least in terms of accents, so it's a wonder why most ESL cultures are still forced to learn the ways of the British.

“ What I think gets me the most when considering both ”
languages—or both forms of the language—is how ignorant the
two of them are with each other.

Frankly, I think British English—in terms of grammar at least—is the proper way to write and speak. It's formal, well structured, and it's down-right sexy. Even as a raised Briton, I have to admit that the spelling of “colour” should be “color” and that the extra ‘U’ makes for a difficult and unnecessary learning curve for those studying ESL. I might be exaggerating a little bit, but it's just like the Oxford Comma debate. Is it necessary, is it not? According to some very light research, Japan, Taiwan, and both Koreas prefer to learn American English. As the internet is becoming more and more Americanized, I suppose it only makes sense for countries in Asia to lean towards American English as they are closer and more likely to go to America than Britain. By that conclusion, it makes sense that Europeans would learn British English as they are all in close proximity to Britain. Location, location, location.



THE BATTLE OF WORDS, COMMAS, THE QUEEN

— RENIE SIMONE (RAY)

What I think gets me the most when considering both languages—or both forms of the language—is how ignorant the two of them are with each other. The Brits make fun of the Americans for having high nasally voices and they say, “Oh my god, no way!” and, “Like, totally!” and, “I had lunch with the president!” all the time. Where the Americans think the British say, “Ello, gov’na, top of the mornin’,” and, “Shall we drink tea with the Queen on this jolly good night?” Spoiler alert: Brits don’t sound like that, and they don’t get regular visits from the Queen. (Fun Fact: If you’re born in the UK and you turn 100 years old, you will literally get a letter from the Queen congratulating you on your century on Earth.)

People all over the internet are convinced that the only difference between the two Englishes are the accents. I suppose it does play a big role in how they are interpreted – being proper or not, for example—but there is so much more than that. There are proper accents, there are chavvy accents (basically, the British version of white trash), and there’s the northerners, and the southerners, and then there’s Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Here’s a bizarre example of basic grammar editing that I just wrote at the beginning of the last paragraph, say it out-loud if you don’t get it at first: “What I think gets me the most...” should really be phrased, “I think what gets me the most...” since the first one is structured with British influence, and the second with American. When I think about it more in depth, I realize that British English is kind of ridiculously hard to grasp in its entirety. But once you get in the groove, it’s hard to turn back. There are so many odd details that makes up British English, it’s no wonder the world is shifting from British to American English!



PUBLIC
DOMAIN
PICTURES

THE JAPANESE LANGUAGE

In this article, we discuss our motivations for learning Japanese language, our impression on the differences between Japanese and English language, and tell our unique stories from our experiences. The difficulties and differences when we speak a second language and Japanese words that are difficult to translate will be discussed. Through these discussions we share our unique experiences and give some tips to understand the Japanese language and culture.

“There are less misunderstandings in English. In Japanese, you use more round-about language (ex. They mean “no” but they don’t see it straightforwardly) and there are a lot more underlying meanings and implications.”

— RIKI HASHIMOTO



お疲れさま	OTSUKARESAMA	Good job (used after finishing hard/tiring work)
もったいない	MOTTAINAI	What a waste (shows Japanese cultural value of not wanting to waste anything)
めんどくさい	MENDOKUSAI	Such a bother (to deal with something; when you are feeling lazy)

Japanese has a lot of onomatopoeia that have different levels, even if they are describing similar actions or abstract views. The meaning will change slightly depending on if it has a dakuten / handakuten, or voiced sound mark on the right side of some letters.

Knocking on a door

トントン(tonton): knocking softly/politely VS ドンドン(dondon): heavy/hard knocking



“Due to constantly moving, I was always having to switch between English and Japanese. Growing up, I disliked Japanese school in the US and I found English much easier to learn. The school I went to in Japan was very competitive and there was intense pressure to be better than everyone else.”

— MIYUKI NODA



“My mom wanted me to learn Japanese because it is part of her culture. I am half Japanese/American so I wanted to explore my Japanese side; this is the main reason I did a study abroad during high school in Kyoto. During my study abroad, I experienced preferential treatment because I was ‘exotic’, and for me that was awesome.”

— JULIA ADAMS

“After studying abroad in Yokohama I now want to teach English in Japan. For me at least, learning to speak was okay, but learning to read and write was difficult. However, I will say my study abroad helped me learn Kanji faster and more efficiently, as well as understand the cultural norms better.”

— KELSEA CANNON



“Kanji is difficult even for native speakers. Because of technology, Japanese people can usually input Kanji, so it is becoming increasingly harder to read and write them.”

— KANTARO HAGI

When you see a difference of language, you will figure out that it comes from the difference of the history, society, and culture. Let's take a look of how Japanese culture affects Japanese. The biggest difference between American and Japanese culture is that Japanese is collectivist and individual. Japanese society is a group society and this has made it develop unwritten rules about communicating. “Formal Speech” is one example, in which Japanese should talk to their superiors or strangers. We can even divide it into three kinds of Formal Speech, and Japanese use each one in appropriate situations. Another example is the Aunno-Kokyu which means harmonizing in communication. For instance, a boss wants his workers to do something and they understand what to do and just do it without being told to do so by the boss. Therefore, Japanese language, which includes unspoken language, shows you what Japanese society is like.

日
本
語

UNTRANSLATABLE

Some words are just not translatable.

From the Prakrit language —

“ Michammi Dukkadam ”

— NIKET BHODIA

I can not claim to identify much with my religion (Jainism) or community (Gujaratis), but there is one tradition Jains practice that I quite admire. Every year, at the end of the 8-day period of fasting and abstention called Paryushan (analogous to the the Christian Lent and the Muslim Ramzaan), Jains join their hands in greeting to one another and say "Michammi Dukkadam," which literally translates to, "If knowingly or unknowingly I have hurt you, then ask for your forgiveness." It is a tradition that promotes humility and helps dissolve the walls of ego and resentment that tend to build up in relationship. I think it makes a lot of sense. So while paryushan season might be long over, the sentiment is eternal.



"Michammi Dukkadam" to everyone at I-House.

From the Urdu language —

“ Bus ”

— DAANYAAL SAEED

In Urdu this word means “enough”, at a simple glance. However, when used as a reply for an explanation, it loosely translates into “because”. Take this example into consideration: children often ask their parents why they can’t do something, and usually the only reply they would get is “bus”. In this context it could mean “just because”, “no reason”, and “because I said so”. That reply is usually a conversation stopper, because it’s implied that the person who said it either doesn’t want to give an explanation or they don’t have one. It’s often the best explanation any parent can give to their child, but as a child, it becomes quite frustrating, leading to a series of more and more questions with the same answer: “bus”.

WORDS

Here, we have native speakers to explain what they mean.

From the Thai language —

“ Sa-bai sa-bai ”

— YANN CHAMROONRAT

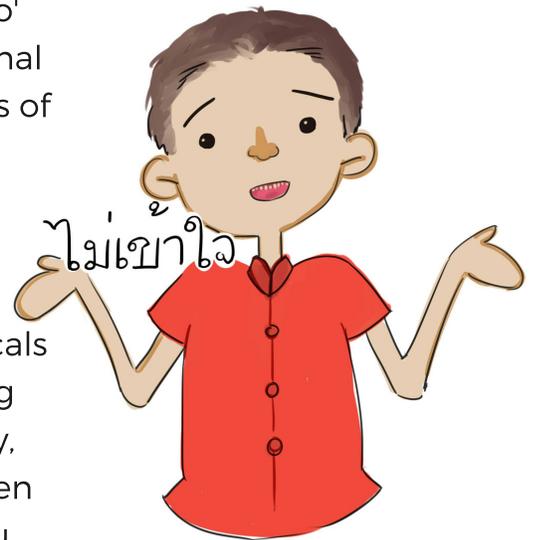
'Sa-bai' on its own translates to 'comfortable'. 'Sa-bai' when repeated twice to 'Sa-bai sa-bai' should mean 'very comfortable', right? It's not wrong, but it's not really the context when used in the Thai language. 'Sa-bai' or 'sa-bai sa-bai' is a pretty common spoken term in Thailand. It is used to express comfort or how someone is feeling. 'How are you doing?' 'Sa-bai sa-bai'. The use of one 'sa-bai' is more often used to describe contentment or satisfactory 'good', similar to English's 'not bad' or 'not much'. 'Sa-bai' when repeated, 'sa-bai sa-bai' emphasizes 'sa-bai', or comfort. Thais use it to describe the most comfortable feelings or situations. It can be often used as a term to describe a lifestyle. Many expats who have lived long enough in Thailand can often describe their time there as 'sa-bai sa-bai'.

From the Thai language —

“ Mai-khao-jai ”

— YANN CHAMROONRAT

'Mai-khao-jai' means 'don't understand'. 'Mai' means 'no' and 'khao-jai' means 'understand'. 'Mai-khao-jai' is a personal favorite phrase out of Thailand because the circumstances of when Thai people use this phrase with expats are quite unique, and many times, cute. In my experience, when asking locals in another country for directions; they might help you, though they may seem unpleasant, ignore you completely, or not know what to say. In Thailand, most locals are able to help you find whatever it is that you are looking for or hoping to do. But when they don't know what to say, they say 'mai-khao-jai' with a smile on their face. Even when someone can't help you in Thailand, they can still help you get a smile on your face.



TRAVEL TAUGHT ME

— LEANN CHERKASKY MAKHNI

Languages. This is one of my very favorite topics. Since I was a child, I have been fascinated by languages. I love the sound of languages, the history of languages, the communication that occurs through languages, learning languages, and the way language represents cultures. I am fascinated by the barriers that we face when we don't speak the same languages, and when our words have different meanings in the same language.



Like anyone who has studied languages and lived and traveled overseas, I have had my share of embarrassing moments with my accent, the words I've chosen, content that I have not understood. I've been taken by surprise many times when I thought I was speaking the same language as someone else, only to realize we had entirely different understandings. I'm not even referring to the additional layer of cultural differences; simply interpretations of words in the same language.

“ At I-House, we have opportunities to contemplate what we think we are communicating and how it is being interpreted by others. ”

Here are a couple of examples of my personal experiences in English, which is my native language:

The first time I was in Israel, I had a roommate from England. Before we became good friends, I asked her how our room was kept warm in the winter. She told me quite simply, “We have a fire.” I was seriously puzzled – where on earth could there be a fire in the room? There was no opening in the roof of our sturdy cabin. At some point, I learned that “fire” meant “electric heater.” We had a good laugh.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY RUI BATEMAN



On perhaps my 12th trip to India, my father-in-law asked me one beautiful day at home where I would like to have lunch that day. I replied, “outside would be fine.”

After a couple of hours of shopping, he asked me again where I would like to have lunch that day. I was quite puzzled since I had answered earlier, nevertheless, I responded: “I thought we were going to eat outside today.”



He replied, “Yes. Where would you like to eat?”

At that point, I was totally confused. He was asking. I was answering, but we were getting nowhere. Finally, after quite a bit of back and forth, we deciphered our miscommunication. It turns out that to me, “outside” meant “in the garden.” To him, “outside” meant “leaving home and eating at a restaurant and he wanted to know which one I preferred.”

As you may imagine, working at I-House for over 25 years, I’ve experienced so many differences of language use and I am constantly learning, which is a real treat for me.



I am interested in spoken and written language, non-verbal cues through facial expression and body language, and cultural interpretations of what has been communicated verbally or through body language. We live in a complicated world.

At I-House, we have opportunities to contemplate what we think we are communicating and how it is being interpreted by others.



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THANK YOU TO THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED

The production of the Fall 2017 SJSU International House Newsletter would not be possible without you. We thank you and are proud to display your work.

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