

European Day of Languages



Hello! Bonjour! Bok! Ahoj! Terve!

Try saying hello in as many languages as possible on 26th September – the European Day of Languages.

Now in its 15th year, the European Day of Languages was set up in order to celebrate the linguistic diversity in

Europe and to promote language learning, particularly lifelong learning in and out of school. It was established by the Council of Europe, a pan-European organisation with 47 member states (not to be confused with the European Union which currently has 28 member states). The main aims of the day are to alert the public to the importance of language learning, to increase the number of languages learnt, and to promote the rich cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe.

There are estimated to be between 6,000 and 7,000 languages spoken throughout the world, the majority of which are spoken in Asia and Africa. Europe can only claim 225 indigenous languages from Gaelic in the west to Aramanian in the east, to Sami in the north to Catalan in the south. The most widely spoken native language is German, followed by English, Italian and French. However, and not unexpectedly, the most widely spoken second language is English followed by German and French. Over half (51%) of the population of Europe can speak English as either a first or additional language, compared to 32% who can speak German and 26% who can speak French.

It is important to remember, of course, that global migration to Europe means that the spread of other languages is growing. Tamil, Urdu, Hindi and Arabic, for example, are all languages with small but significant groups of native speakers.

The European Union (that's the other organisation with the 28-soon-to-be-27 members) has 24 official and working languages. They are: Bulgarian, French, Maltese, Croatian, German, Polish, Czech, Greek, Portuguese, Danish, Hungarian, Romanian, Dutch, Irish, Slovak, English, Italian, Slovenian, Estonian, Latvian, Spanish, Finnish, Lithuanian, Swedish. Some regional languages such as Welsh and Catalan have co-official status. The European Commission (the bureaucratic arm of the European Union) has a permanent staff of 1,750 linguists and 600 support staff and the largest translation services in the world. In addition there are 600 full-time and 3,000 freelance translators. Language in Europe is big business!

So why don't you celebrate the rich linguistic diversity in Europe and exchange a few words in a new language on Monday 26 September? Join in the European Day of Languages, or do we mean *Día Europeo de las Lenguas* or *Europeiska språkdagen* or *Lá Eorpach na dTeangacha ...?*

If you'd like to know more about the European Day of Languages, then click [here](#).

And in case you were wondering about the 'hellos' at the top of the first page: *Bonjour* is French; *Bok* is Croatian; *Ahoj* is Czech; *Terve* is Finnish. And the European Day of Languages is translated into *Día Europeo de las Lenguas* (Spanish), *Europeiska språkdagen* (Swedish) and *Lá Eorpach na dTeangacha* (Gaelic).

If you would like to use the European Day of Languages as a topic in your lesson, then we have provided you with two activities at A2 level. You'll find them in the following **Teacher's notes**.

Teacher's notes

Before doing either of these activities, ask students which languages they know. If you have a native speaker of another language, ask him/her to make a small speech in their native language – perhaps about life here. Encourage other students who are competent users of a second language to speak a little in that language. See how many languages the class can communicate in.

1 The language of love (Level A2 and above, 5+mins)

- Make a copy of the **Worksheet**, one for each student.
- On the board write: *European Day of Languages* and ask students what they think this day celebrates (the diversity of languages in Europe).
- On the board write: *I love you* and ask students what language this is (English). Explain that students are going to do an activity where they are going to read nine translations of the phrase *I love you* and they have to choose the correct language.
- Hand out the **Worksheet**, one to each student.
- Give students two minutes to complete the activity and then to compare with his/her partner.
- Check answers together in class. (Key: 1h, 2f, 3d, 4g, 5b, 6a, 7c, 8i, 9e)
- Ask students if anybody can say *I love you* in another language.

2 What's your name? (Level A2 and above, 15+mins)

- On the board write: *What's your name?* and elicit the answer: *My name is (Maria).*
- Make sure all students have a copy of the **Worksheet**.
- Ask students to work in pairs. Explain that students should match up the question in the first column with the correct response in the second column.
- With a more advanced class, ask them to use modals to determine which question and response goes together. *It could be 1 and c because they both have the word 'hedder'.*
- Check answers together in class. (Key: 1c, 2g, 3a, 4f, 5e, 6h, 7i, 8b, 9d)
- When students all have the correct questions and responses, ask them to look at the languages from **The language of love** on the **Worksheet**.
- The questions and responses are written in these same nine languages. Ask students to match up the languages with the questions and responses.
- Check answers together in class. (Key: 1c Danish, 2g German, 3a Hungarian, 4f Finnish, 5e Norwegian, 6h Spanish, 7i French, 8b Italian, 9d Romanian)
- If your students would like to practise, remember the correct pronunciation isn't shown. You'll find most of the phrases on the Internet where you can hear the correct pronunciation.

Worksheet

1 The language of love

In the first column is the phrase *I love you*, written in nine languages. Match the phrase to the correct language.

	<i>I love you</i>		Language
1	Ich liebe dich	a	Italian
2	Jeg elsker dig	b	Finnish
3	Te amo	c	Romanian
4	Je t'aime	d	Spanish
5	Mă rakastan sua	e	Hungarian
6	Ti amo	f	Danish
7	Te iubesc	g	French
8	Volim te	h	German
9	Szeretlek	i	Croatian

Can you say *I love you* in any other languages?

2 What's your name?

Match the question to the correct response – in nine languages.

	<i>What's your name?</i>		<i>My name is ...</i>
1	Hvad hedder du?	a	A nevem ...
2	Wie heißt du?	b	Mi chiamo ...
3	Mi a neve?	c	Jeg hedder ...
4	Mikä sinun nimesi on?	d	Mă numesc ...
5	Hva heter du?	e	Jeg heter ...
6	¿Cómo te llamas?	f	Nimeni on ...
7	Comment tu t'appelles?	g	Ich heiße ...
8	Como te chiami?	h	Me llamo ...
9	Cum vă numiți?	i	Je m'appelle ...

Look at the languages in the first activity, **The language of love**. Match the questions and responses to the correct language.

Practise saying the questions and responses with your partner.