



Multilingualism and the Internet

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InternetSociety.org

About ISOC

- Founded in 1992 by Internet pioneers
- Dedicated to ensuring the open development, evolution and use of the Internet for the benefit of people throughout the world
- International not-for-profit organisation
 - Offices located in *Washington* and *Geneva*
 - Regional Bureaus cover *Africa*, *Asia*, *Latin America*
 - 90+ Organisational Members
 - 26,000+ Individual Members
 - 80+ Chapters worldwide



ISOC Programs

- Trust and Future of the Internet
- User Centric Internet
- Internet Governance leadership
- Internet Policy
 - *Preserving the ability to connect, speak, innovate, share, choose and trust*
- Regional Policy Advisory Groups
- Interconnectivity and Standards Development
 - *IETF, IESG, IAB*
- ISOC Fellowships: *IGF, IETF, Chapter Fellowships*
- Membership and Chapter Development
- ccTLD/Technical workshops
- Conferences and Events: *INETs, NDSS*
- Publications and Orientation/briefing Papers



ISOC Chapters in Asia Pacific

- **South Asia**

- Bangladesh
- India - New Delhi
- India - Chennai (Madras)
- India - Kolkata
- Nepal
- Pakistan

- **Southeast Asia**

- Cambodia
- Philippines
- Thailand

- **East Asia and Pacific**

- Hong Kong
- Japan
- Korea - Republic of (South)
- Taiwan
- Australia
- Pacific Islands

ISOC Membership is free in the “Global Member” category. For details see:

<http://www.isoc.org/membership/>



Question Time:

**HOW MANY
LANGUAGES DO
YOU SPEAK?**

How many languages in the world?

| World area | Languages | | Speakers | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|----------------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|
| | Number | Percent | Number | Percent | Median | Mean |
| Africa | 2,092 | 30.3% | 675,887,158 | 11.8% | 25,391 | 323,082 |
| Americas | 1,002 | 14.5% | 47,559,381 | 0.8% | 2,000 | 47,464 |
| Asia | 2,269 | 32.8% | 3,489,897,147 | 61.0% | 10,171 | 1,538,077 |
| Europe | 239 | 3.5% | 1,504,393,183 | 26.3% | 220,000 | 6,294,532 |
| Pacific | 1,310 | 19.0% | 6,124,341 | 0.1% | 800 | 4,675 |
| Totals | 6,912 | 100.0% | 5,723,861,210 | 100.0% | 7,000 | 828,105 |

SOURCE: www.ethnologue.com

The major languages

| Languages with 20 - 99 million speakers | | | |
|---|------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Languages | Speakers (in millions) | | |
| | 1st language | 2nd language | Total |
| Punjabi | 88 | ? | 88 |
| Javanese | 75 | ? | 76 |
| Telugu | 70 | 5 | 75 |
| Tamil | 66 | 8 | 74 |
| Marathi | 68 | 3 | 71 |
| Korean | 67 | ? | 67 |
| Vietnamese | 67 | ? | 67 |
| Italian | ? | ? | 61 |
| Turkish | 51 | ? | 51 |
| Kannada | 44 | ? | 44 |
| Polish | 43 | ? | 43 |
| Ukrainian | 37 | ? | 37 |
| Persian/Dari/Tajik | 36 | ? | 36 |
| Gujarati | 46 | ? | 36 |
| Malayalam | 36 | ? | 36 |
| Hausa | 19 | 15 | 34 |
| Oriya | 33 | ? | 33 |
| Burmese | 32 | ? | 32 |
| Swahili | 1 | 30 | 31 |
| Yoruba | 20 | 2 | 22 |
| Thai | 20 | ? | 20 |

These languages are spoken by another 1,034,000,000 people, or by close 16% of the current world population.

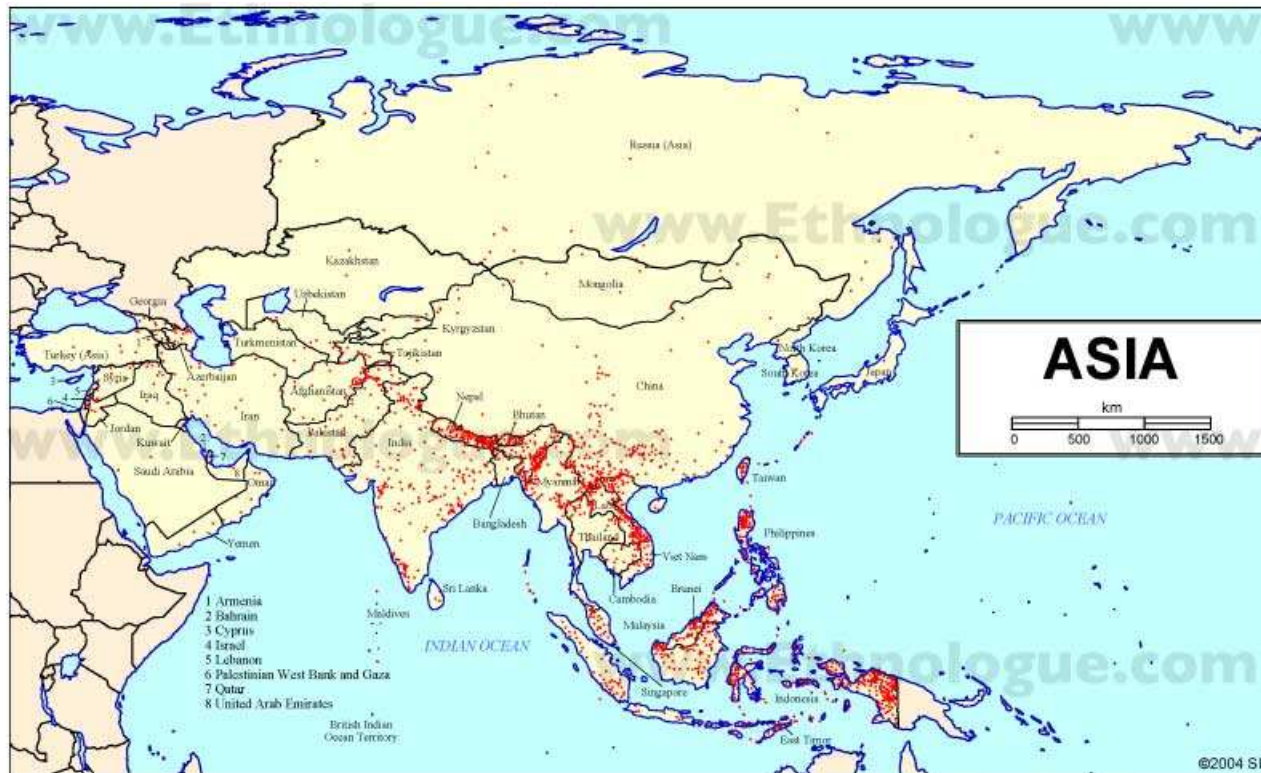
| Languages with over 100 million speakers | | | |
|--|------------------------|--------------|-------|
| Languages | Speakers (in millions) | | |
| | 1st language | 2nd language | Total |
| Mandarin | 873 | 178 | 1,051 |
| English | 340 | 168 | 508 |
| Hindi/Urdu | 242 | 224 | 466 |
| Arabic (all varieties) | 206 | 246 | 452 |
| Spanish | 322 | 60 | 382 |
| Russian | 145 | 110 | 255 |
| Bengali | 171 | 34 | 211 |
| Portuguese | 177 | 15 | 192 |
| Indonesian | 23 | 140 | 163 |
| German | 95 | 28 | 123 |
| Japanese | 122 | 1 | 123 |
| French | 65 | 50 | 115 |

These languages are spoken by over 4,041,000,000 people, or 61% of the current world population.

SOURCE: www.ethnologue.com



Languages in Asia



SOURCE: www.ethnologue.com

The question of languages on the Internet

- Historically, English has been “*the language of the Internet*”
 - ***Not the case anymore!***
- However, world’s linguistic diversity not represented on the Internet
- Further global growth needs linguistic diversity
 - Getting the next billion(s) online will need linguistic diversity
 - The next billion(s) online will demand linguistic diversity

Linguistic Diversity is Critical

- The Internet is:
 - a major source of information
 - depository of knowledge
 - the communications and business medium
- Internet available for everyone, Internet used by everyone requires linguistic diversity!

Challenges

- Technical
 - Mostly fixed; Unicode major contributor
 - What remains: mainly national level issues (keyboard layouts, multilingual/localised software applications)
- Economic
 - Least developed economies – poor economic incentive for vendors as demand low, returns low; government has other funding priorities
- Literacy rates
- Political will

Biggest Challenge

- Content
 - No available content means little incentive to use
 - Typical developing country effort is small-scale, voluntary
 - *Sustainability, keeping up-to-date are major issues*
 - Tendency to publish information in “international languages”
- Content does not have to be in written form

Making It Happen

- Requires concerted, co-ordinated, and committed effort by all stakeholders
 - Government
 - International community
 - Civil society
 - Academia
 - Anyone and everyone concerned!
- Multi-stakeholder participation is key
 - Holistically look at the key enablers to make multilingualism a reality

Some Key Enablers

- Content
 - Attaining critical mass of content to attract existing and new users
 - Cultural, historical, linguistic, academic, educational materials available online
 - Government providing its information and forms, etc. online in local languages
 - Support from local information/content generators (including media) to move content online in local languages
 - As content is created, new users will go online and generate their own content, thus sustainability

Some Key Enablers

- Tools and Standards
 - Can significantly simplify use of language online
 - Localisation of software
 - Keyboard standards/layout to standardise text input
 - National Standardisation Institutes have a key role in ensuring necessary standards are developed

Some Key Enablers

- Capacity Building
 - Basic literacy in particular language(s)
 - Technical ability to move paper, oral and other content online
 - IT literacy in particular language(s)
 - Where illiteracy is an issue, non-written content (e.g. voice and video) could be encouraged

Questions or Comments?

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