

1 Look at questions 1–4. In pairs, discuss the questions. Then, read the texts quickly to check your answers.

- 1 How many languages are there in the world?
- 2 What European language family does Polish belong to?
- 3 Which Asian language has the most speakers?
- 4 What are some common second languages in Africa?

LANGUAGES of the WORLD



There are around 7,000 different languages in the world today. Languages that are similar to each other are in groups or 'families'. Some languages have a lot of speakers and others have very few. Many of the smaller languages have no writing, so when the last speaker dies, the language dies too.

Europe

Europe has 284 different languages. One language family here is Romance languages, which includes Spanish, Portuguese and Italian. Another is Slavic languages, such as Russian, Polish and Czech.

English belongs to the Germanic group, and is the third largest language in the world: 335 million people speak it as a first language and 505 million speak it as a second language. The Basque language from Spain and France is very unusual. It doesn't belong to any language family!

Asia

Asia has 2,303 languages. Chinese has a billion speakers – more than any other language in the world. Hindi is the world's fourth largest language, and Arabic comes fifth. Some parts of Asia have a very large number of languages.

Australia and Oceania

This area has 1,311 languages in total. The main language of Australia and New Zealand is English, but there are a lot of smaller languages too. Papua New Guinea has only around 8 million people, but it has 832 languages – more than any other country! Unfortunately, some Aboriginal languages are very small now and have only one or two speakers.

Americas

This area has 1,060 languages. English and Spanish have the most speakers on these continents. Spanish, with 406 million speakers, is the world's second-largest language. Portuguese is spoken in Brazil. While in Canada people speak mainly English and French. There are also many other native languages, for example Mam, a Mayan language, which people speak in parts of Mexico and Guatemala.

Africa

Human language probably began on this continent. There are 2,146 languages here. Many people in Africa can speak more than one language because, as well as their own language, they also speak English, French or Portuguese.



2 Read the texts again and answer the questions.

- 1 What are the three biggest languages in the world?
How many speakers do they have?
- 2 Which continent has the most languages?
- 3 Which country has the largest number of languages?
- 4 What is special about the Basque language?
- 5 What has happened to some of the languages of Australia and Oceania?



TALKING POINTS



12 Watch the video and discuss the questions.

What languages do you speak?

What languages are you studying?

What languages do your parents speak?