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As Marathi Speakers Learn English



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Map shows the region in which Marathi is the official language (No author, UCLA Language Materials Project, 2011).

Marathi Overview

- Marathi is spoken by 70 million people as an L1 and an additional 2 million people as an L2 (UCLA Language Materials Project, 2011).
- It is spoken primarily in the Indian state of Maharashtra (where it is the official language of the state), but is also spoken in Israel and Mauritius (Ager, 2011).
- There are as many as 42 dialects of spoken Marathi. Key dialects include: Cochin, Dangii, Gawdi of Goa, Kasargod, Kisti, Kudali, Nagpuri, Marati, Malwany, and Varhadii (UCLA Language Materials Project, 2011).
- Marathi developed from Sanskrit and, thus, is closely related to Hindi and Punjabi. First records of Marathi date back to the 11th century (The Technology Group, 2008).



The green area shows the state that speaks Marathi (The Technology Group, www.aboutworldlanguages.com 2008).

Where are Marathi Speakers in the United States?

- As of 2009, there were only 9 Marathi speakers enrolled as ELL students at the University Level in the United States (Modern Language Association, 2011).
- 7 - Illinois (University of Chicago)
- 2 - Pennsylvania (University of Pennsylvania)

Discourse Variety

सर्व मनुष्यजात जन्मतःच स्वतंत्र आहे व सर्वजणांना समान प्रतिष्ठा व समान अधिकार आहेत. त्यांना विचारशक्ती व सदसद्विवेकबुद्धी लाभलेली आहे व त्यांनी एकमेकांशी बंधुत्वाच्या भावनेने आचरण करावे.

Example of Marathi Script--1st article of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ager, 2011).

- As the official language of the state of Maharashtra, Marathi is used in formal situations, but also casually in everyday speech (UCLA Language Materials Project, 2011).
- Additionally, though there are 42 dialects--there is a high degree of intelligibility between the dialects.
- Because Marathi has switched alphabets in its written form, some Marathi text is not accessible to otherwise literate Marathi speakers.

Alphabet

क	ka [kə]	ख	kha [kʰə]	ग	ga [gə]	घ	gha [gʱə]	ङ	ṅa [ŋə]
च	ca [tʃə/tʃə]	छ	cha [tʃʰə]	ज	ja [d͡ʒə/zə]	झ	jha [d͡ʒʱə/zʱə]	ञ	ña [ɲə]
ट	ṭa [ʈə]	ठ	ṭha [ʈʰə]	ड	ḍa [ɖə]	ढ	ḍha [ɖʱə]	ण	ṇa [ɳə]
त	ta [tə]	थ	tha [tʰə]	द	da [d̪ə]	ध	dha [d̪ʱə]	न	na [nə]
प	pa [pə]	फ	pha [pʰə/fə]	ब	ba [bə]	भ	bha [bʱə]	म	ma [mə]
य	ya [jə]	र	ra [rə]	ऋ	ṛa [ɾə]	ल	la [lə]	व	va [və/wə]
श	śa [ʃə]	ष	ṣa [ʃə]	स	sa [sə]				
ह	ha [ɦə]	ळ	ḷa [ɭə]	क्ष	kṣa [kʃə]	ज्ञ	jña [d͡ʒnə]	श्र	śra [ʃrə]

Notes

च [ç] ज [j] झ [ʒʱ] when followed by front vowels (i, e, etc) and in loanwords

झ छ ग घ ङ
च छ ज झ
ठ ठ उ द ण
त थ च घ ङ
ढ ण घ भ म
ल ऋ ए ष
ण उ ष ल ऋ ए
श ष र णि शै शै
शै शै शै: ऋ
१ २ ३ ४ ५
६ ७ ८ ९ ०
Kotem1 font

(Ager, 2011)

(Ager, 2011)

- Marathi has been written using the Devanagari alphabet since 1950 (Ager, 2011).
- Before 1950, it was written using the Modi alphabet.
- Like English, it is written from left to right (Ager, 2011).

Number Struggles

०	१	२	३	४	५	६	७	८	९	१०
संढ्या	यक	दोन	तीन	चार	पांच	सहा	सात	आठ	नुडु	दहा
sandhya	ek	don	tin	char	panch	shah	sāt	āṭh	nuu	dha
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Number Chart, (Ager, 2011).

- Marathi students learning English may also struggle with the numbers. Many numbers resemble English numbers (1, 2, 3), but many number also resemble the other English numbers.
- Example, the Marathi 5 resembles the English 4. The Marathi 7 resembles the English 6.

Phonology

- Marathi has 9-11 vowel phonemes (depending on analysis).
- It has 25 consonant sounds.
- There are few consonant clusters in Marathi.
 - Therefore, Marathi students may struggle to produce sounds like -sh, or -tch
- Marathi stresses the first syllable in each word.
 - Therefore, Marathi students may struggle with inflection and stressing the correct part of the word as English is inconsistent regarding which part of the word or sentence will be stressed.

Morphology

- Verbs may agree with subjects or objects. Verbs may also not agree with any part of the sentence.
- Syntactical functions are accomplished through suffixes added to root words. Passive voice and active voice are created by agreement between the verb and subject or object (respectively). When the verb matches neither the subject, nor the object it creates an imperative (UCLA Language Materials Project, 2011).
- Also, suffixes are added to nouns to show number, gender, case.
 - Example: Dog can be said three ways (masculine, feminine, and neuter): ku-*tvraa*, ku-*tvree*, ku-*tvre* (Marathimitra, 2010).

The Pitfalls in Learning English: Morphology

- Students may struggle with maintaining subject-verb agreement, as the verb can agree with other parts of the sentence in Marathi.
 - Example: I want(s) a book. The student may add the (s) ending in order to conjugate the verb to agree with the object.

Syntax

- There are no articles in Marathi.
- Typically, the word order used is SOV (subject-object-verb).
- Unlike English, which uses prepositions, Marathi uses “post positions.”
 - Example: *te-ba-laa* means table. *Wa-ra* means on. “*te-ba-laa-wa-ra*.”
- Like English, modifiers proceed the word that they modify.
- In Marathi, word order does not change between statements and questions.
 - Example: *Tula ice cream avadta?* (Do you like ice cream?)
Tula ice cream avadta. (You like ice cream.)

The Pitfalls in Learning English: Syntax

Articles are often omitted or added unnecessarily.

Example: Bring me (the) spoon.

Why are are you watching (the) TV? (Gauri, 2010)

Word order may become jumbled, as the student tries to use SOV in place of the English SVO.

Example: I the food bring.

Prepositions may be misplaced, as they always follow the object in Marathi.

Example: The horse on (instead of “on the horse.”)

Word order in questions may be incorrect, as the word order does not need to change in Marathi to differentiate between a statement and a question.

Example: “You are understanding?” in place of “Are you understanding?”

Communication Style

- Like many Indians, Marathi speakers use the “head bobble.” This indicates agreement with the speaker without having to interrupt his speech (Butler, 2011).
- Marathi speaker will almost never respond with a “no” in order to be polite. In fact, usually they will tell you whatever they believe you want to hear to this end (Butler, 2011).
- **To this end, a teacher may struggle to get an accurate answer from a Marathi speaking child. For example, when a teacher asks, “Do you understand?” the child will likely respond “Yes,” to be polite, whether or not he or she actually understands.**
- **Likewise, a teacher could potentially offend a parent or child by responding with the negative to an inquiry.**
- **Finally, when speaking with an elder (a teacher), Marathi speakers are likely to use indirect eye contact.**
- **Thus, a teacher should never force a student to “Look me in the eye!”**

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Maps

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Images

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