



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## **M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports**

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program  
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Language Group: Marshallese

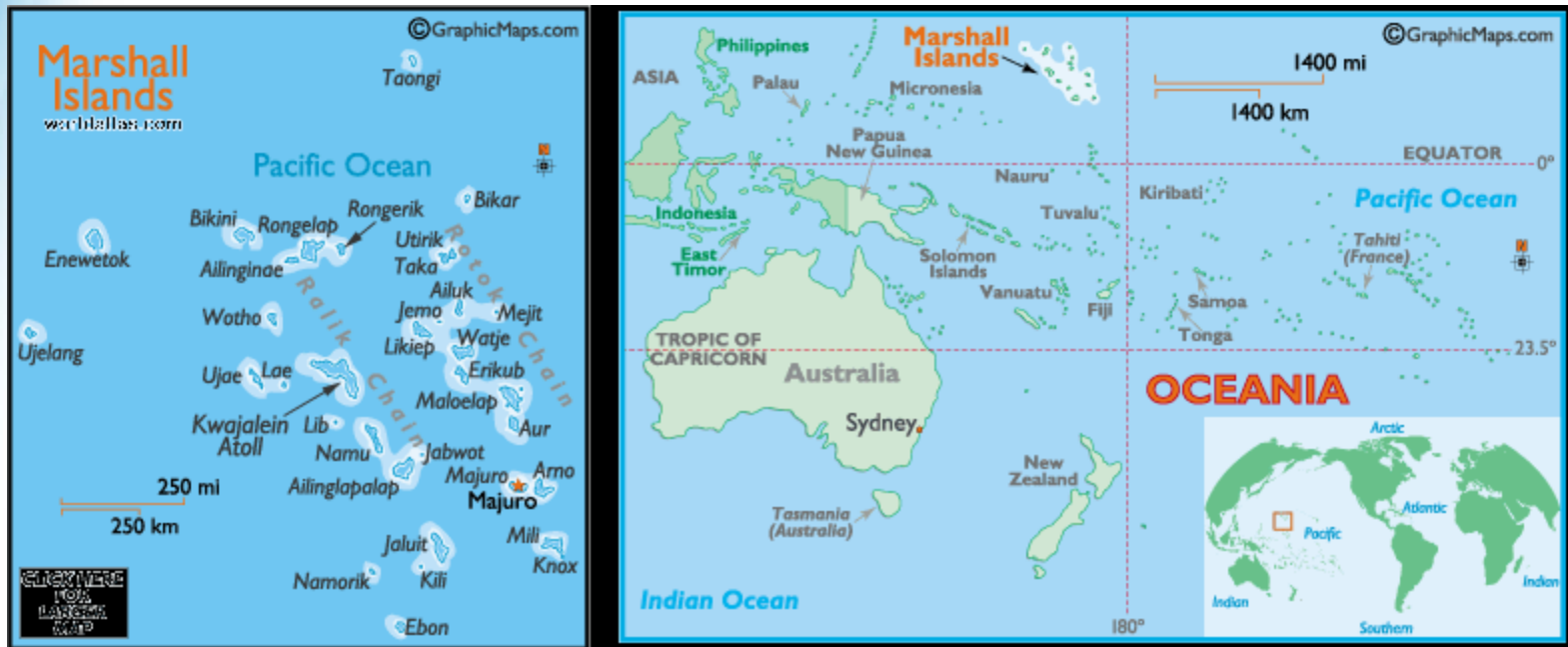
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# **Marshallese Project**

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# Where is Marshallese spoken?



Map of the Marshall Islands. <<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/oceania/mh.htm>>

Marshallese along with English are the official languages of The Marshall Islands.

Omniglot: *Marshallese*. <<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/marshallese.php>>

# Facts about Marshallese

- Spoken by about 23,000 people on the Marshall Islands in the North Pacific.
- A member of the Micronesian Family.
- Three Dialects:
  - Rālik
  - Enewetak
  - Ujelang

# Facts about Marshallese:

- 94% Literacy Rate
- Marshallese Pronunciation:

## Vowels

a ā e i o o / o o / ö u ū / ü  
[ɐ, ɛ, a] [ɐ, ɔ] [ɛ, e] [i, i, ə, ɪ] [ə, ʏ] [ɔ, ʌ] [ɔ, o] [i, ɯ, i, u] [ə, ʊ]

## Consonants

b d dw j k l ɭ / ɬ ɭw m m̥ / m̄  
[b] [ɾʏ] [ɾʏw] [tʃ] [k] [tʃ] [lʏ] [lʏw] [mʃ] [m̄]  
n ɳ / ɳ̄ ɳw ñ / ñ̄ / ɲ ñw p r t w  
[nʃ] [nʏ] [nʏw] [ɲ] [ɲw] [pʃ] [ɾʃ] [tʃ] [w]

# Marshallese Language:

- The construction of a common dictionary and standard grammar has become one unifying focus since Marshallese independence
- Marshallese is written with the Latin alphabet.



*Marshallese Alphabet.*

<<http://www.unicover.com/EB00IIFO.HTM>>

Let's Learn Marshallese

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3HuZRhWVEW8>

# Difficulties When Learning English

## Part I:

- The Marshallese language makes no distinction between ‘I ate’ and ‘I was eating’. Students may have difficulty using helping verbs. Therefore there is no distinct use of the past tense.
- ‘e’ is used to represent he, she and it. Therefore students may not be have trouble using these different nouns in English.
- When using the word ‘or’ in a question it is ‘ak” in Marshallese and then when using it in a statement it is ‘ge ej jab’ (‘if it’s not’). Due to this fact, students may have difficulty when using the word or in English.

*Practical Marshallese.* Peter Rudiak-Gould (2004).

# Difficulties When Learning English

## Part II:

- Students may have inverse question statements, instead of asking “where are you going?”, they may ask, “you are going where?”
- There is no word for “have” in Marshallese. Students may say “There is my notebook” instead of “I have my notebook”.
- Marshallese makes no distinction between my and mine; students may have difficulty with learning various possessives in English.

*Practical Marshallese.* Peter Rudiak-Gould (2004).



# Difficulties When Learning English

## Part III:

- In Marshallese, many nouns are used as verbs. For example students may say “I church”, instead of “I am going to church.”
- Students may not add an “s” to the end of plural nouns because plural nouns stay the same in Marshallese.
- Verbs in Marshallese do not conjugate, there is nothing in Marshallese that means “-ing” or “ed”; the verbs stay the same in present, past, and future.

*Practical Marshallese.* Peter Rudiak-Gould (2004).

# Difficulties When Learning English

## Part IV:

- Since Marshallese has two different meanings of “or”, students may have difficulty differentiating between the proper uses of “or” and “nor” in English.
- In Marshallese, not only does the word for “father” and “mother” reference their actual parents, they also could mean their father’s brothers and “mother’s sisters”.

*Practical Marshallese.* Peter Rudiak-Gould (2004).

# Non-Verbal Communication

## Part I:

- “Yes”-eyebrows raised, head may be titled slightly up (*Not* a nod of the head like in English).
- “No”- frown, lips sticking out a bit, sometimes a slight shake of the head (Not just a shake of the head like in English).
- “I don’t know”- sides of the mouth pulled out and back to form a grimace (Not just a shrug of the shoulders like in English).

# Non-Verbal Communication

## Part II

- “Come here”- one hand extended forward with the palm down, then brought down and toward the body quickly (Not one hand held out palm up, and fingers towards the body, like in English).
- “It was this big”- right hand is held up, then the side of the left hand is put somewhere along the right hand or arm to indicate how big or long something is (Not both hands held up in front of the body, with the distance between them indicating the size, like in English).

# Education System:

- The program of socialization in local values and cultural abilities is supplemented with formal schooling.
- Outer atoll schools (or formal schooling) include grades one through eight with curricula focused on reading, English, and arithmetic; those who pass an exam will attend high school in Majuro.
- Males will often follow their fathers, uncles or older siblings to fishing or gathering expeditions.
- Whereas females, by the age of four or five become nursemaids.



# Etiquette:

- Elders rank above those who are younger and chiefs rank above commoners.
- Codes of respect and deference are important.
- One should not walk in front of, upwind of, or elevate one's head.

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