

Language experts agree that language learning is most effective when language and culture are linked. *The Polyglots* apps aim to spark children's interest in language and culture through play. This guide provides some general information about Arabic language and Arab cultures that may be of interest to you and may extend children's learning.

About the Arab region

The Arab region includes 22 countries and territories in North Africa, the Arabian Peninsula and the eastern Mediterranean coast. It is home to more than 340 million people (in comparison, about 23 million people live in Australia). The region is linked by a common language – Arabic.

Countries and territories in the region include: Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, the Palestinian Territories, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia and Yemen.

Early childhood education in the Arab region

The Arab region encompasses many different countries and territories, each with different policies and levels of wealth. Early childhood education varies across the region. For example, in 2010, less than 5 per cent of children in Yemen and Mauritania attended early childhood education. In the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, more than 80 per cent of children attended.¹

DID YOU KNOW?

Iran and Turkey are not part of the Arab region.

Language

There are many different dialects of Arabic. The language spoken in *The Polyglots* apps is called Modern Standard Arabic. This is the most commonly understood language across the Arab region, and is the language used in books, newspapers and media

(including children's cartoons). All of the dialects of Arabic share a common writing system, which has an alphabet of 28 letters and is read from right to left.

Pronouncing Arabic

In the support materials for the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) programme, Arabic script has been transcribed using the Roman alphabet. This is guidance only. For correct pronunciation, please listen to the words as they are spoken in the app.

DID YOU KNOW?

Arabic is the third most commonly spoken language in Australia after English.



Culture

The Arab region is huge and diverse and has many different peoples, cultures, religions and traditions. A large majority of people in the Arab region are Muslim. Christianity is also a significant religion in the region.

Politeness and customs

- In the Arab region, the left hand is considered unclean. It is rude to eat with your left hand or to use your left hand to pass someone food or drink.
- The polite way to beckon someone is with your right hand. Hold your palm down and make a scratching motion with your fingers.
- In some parts of the Arab region, you can say thank you by placing your right hand against your chest and bowing your head slightly with your eyes closed.
- In the Arab region, you take off your shoes when going into someone's house.
- In the Arab region, it is rude to show the soles of your feet or shoes. When sitting, you can point your feet down or put them flat on the floor.
- In some parts of the Arab region, it is not polite to open a gift in front of the person who gave it to you. You can open it later, at home.

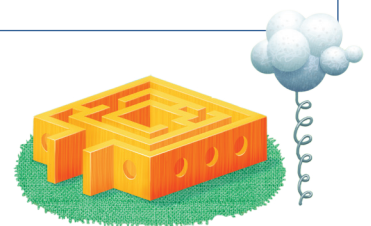
¹ Early childhood care and education regional report: Arab states', United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2010

CULTURE IN THE POLYGLOTS APPS

As children play with the apps, they can discover fun and intriguing Arab cultural references such as a camel, a pomegranate, an Aladdin-style lamp and a mosaic tile. You can learn more about the cultural references in each app's overview support document (for example, *App 1: The Polyglots in the Playroom – Arabic*).

Interesting topics

<p>Animals</p>	<p>The animals of the Arab region include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arabian horses • camels • caracals or desert lynxes (wild cats with long black ears) • crocodiles • donkeys • elephants • hippopotamuses • horned vipers (venomous snakes with tiny horns above their eyes) • jackals (animals in the same family as wolves and dogs) • sand cats • scorpions.
<p>Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calligraphy: the Arab world has a long tradition of using beautifully presented Arabic script to celebrate the Qur'an and to decorate buildings and objects. • Carpets: Arabian carpets are made from wool, silk, cotton and sometimes camel and goat hair. • Zellige: mosaic tiles are a feature of Moroccan buildings. They are colourful and geometrical.
<p>Food</p>	<p>Food varies greatly across the Arab world. Below are some of the foods from different areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Across the Arab region, dates are eaten with and without fillings as snacks. • Sweet mint tea is enjoyed in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. It is made with green tea, mint leaves and sugar. • Lahoh is a flat pancake-like bread eaten in Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen. It can be eaten at breakfast with honey and ghee (clarified butter) or at lunchtime and dinnertime with a main meal. • Tabbouleh is a salad made with parsley, mint, tomatoes and onions. Variations are eaten in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria.



<p>Games</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Syria, children play hajla, a game similar to hopscotch. • In Tunisia, there is a game called tлага, in which players compete to score points by knocking a small stick with a large stick in and out of a circle. • In Oman, Al Hawalees is a game played by adults. It can be played on the ground with stones or on a board with pieces. The goal is to remove all of your opponent’s stones from the game.
<p>Places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Sahara desert extends across Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan and Tunisia. After the Arctic and Antarctica, it is the largest desert in the world. • South-west of Doha in Qatar, there is a desert where sand dunes ‘sing’ when the wind blows. • The Dead Sea is a border between Jordan and Israel. The sea is very salty and people float easily in it. In fact, people’s bodies are so buoyant in the water that it can be difficult to touch the ground. • Babil in Iraq is home to the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon. • The city of Petra in Jordan is partly carved into the side of a mountain. Much of the stone is pink. • Off the coast of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates, artificial islands have been created, each in the shape of a different country of the world. • Egypt’s famous pyramids are the tombs of ancient pharaohs. They were built 4000 to 5000 years ago. Sudan also has pyramids, somewhat smaller than those in Egypt.
<p>Geography</p>	<p>Like Australia, much of the Arab region is desert. There are also large areas that are grassy, around the Tigris, Euphrates, Jordan and Nile rivers. The majority of people in the region live in those areas.</p>

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Language experts agree that language learning is most effective when language and culture are linked. *The Polyglots* apps aim to spark children's interest in both Chinese language and culture through play. This guide provides some general information about China and Chinese culture and language that may be of interest to you and may extend children's learning.

About China

More people live in China than in any other country in the world – about 1.35 billion (in comparison, about 23 million people live in Australia). The country is also geographically big – it borders 14 other countries.

Early childhood education in China

Increasing access to early childhood education is a priority of the Chinese government. In 2013, 67.5 per cent of children attended early childhood education.¹

Language

There are many Chinese dialects, which are often mutually unintelligible. However, all are united by a common writing system. That means that even if speakers cannot understand each other they can understand each other's writing.

Mandarin is the official language in both China and Singapore. It is also the world's most widely spoken language – the first or additional language of more than 1 billion people. It is a tonal language with four main tones: a level tone; a rising tone (such as English speakers use when asking a question); a falling and rising tone; and a falling tone.

Simplified Chinese characters and Pinyin

In the 1950s, written Chinese characters were simplified. The support materials for the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) programme use the simplified system. The support materials also use Pinyin (<https://chinese.yabla.com/chinese-pinyin-chart.php>), the official phonetic system for representing Mandarin with a Roman alphabet. For correct pronunciation, please listen to the words as they are

DID YOU KNOW?

Mandarin is the most commonly spoken language in Australia after English.

spoken in the app.

Culture

China was unified by the first Chinese emperor in 221 BCE, and it has a long and rich cultural history that has influenced many of its neighbours. In the 1960s, great cultural changes swept across the country as the Cultural Revolution challenged 'old customs, old culture, old habits and old ideas'. In recent decades, China has become the manufacturing centre of the world, with the world's fastest growing economy.

Politeness and customs

- In China, you can beckon someone by holding your palm down and make a scratching motion with your fingers.
- Only close friends and relatives ask 'Ni hao ma?' (How are you?) When greeting acquaintances, you could say 'Ni hao' (Hello).
- You can point by using your whole hand. (It is rude to point with your index finger.)
- In China, you take off your shoes when going into someone's house.
- When giving a gift, you hand it to the other person with both hands. The person receiving the gift will accept it with both hands.

CULTURE IN THE POLYGLOTS APPS

As children play with the apps, they can discover fun and intriguing Chinese cultural references such as a panda, a dragon and a peony flower. You can learn more about the cultural references in each app's overview support document (for example, *App 1: The Polyglots in the Playroom – Chinese*).

¹ 'China vows to expand preschool education access', China.org.cn, 16 November 2014, www.china.org.cn/wap/2014-11/16/content_34064629.htm

Interesting topics

<p>Animals</p>	<p>The animals of China include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian elephants • horses • leopard cats (small wild cats with leopard markings) • pandas • pangolins (an unusual mammal with large scales and a long tail) • raccoon dogs (an animal with a raccoon-like appearance in the same family as dogs and wolves) • tigers.
<p>Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Painting: traditionally, an 'inkstick' is used rather than paint. It is rubbed onto a surface and mixed with water to create ink. • Calligraphy: in China, there is a long tradition of writing beautifully using an ink-and-wash technique. • Lanterns: in China, paper or silk lanterns are used as decoration, especially to celebrate Chinese New Year. • Paper cutting: this craft is made by cutting paper. When unfolded, the paper forms intricate patterns and pictures.
<p>Food</p>	<p>There are many regional cuisines in China. The Chinese food that we see in Australia is often Cantonese food from the Guǎngdōng region (for example, yum cha). Rice and noodles are particularly popular in the south. Steamed breads are popular in the north. Tea (including green, jasmine and chrysanthemum tea) is very popular throughout China. Some people carry a small thermos with them so that they can drink tea wherever they are.</p> <p>Chinese foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • yum cha: small dishes such as jiǎozi (dumplings) and bāo (buns), eaten with tea. Yum cha means 'drink tea' in Cantonese. This Cantonese term is used because yum cha is a Cantonese cuisine • hot, peppery dishes from the Sīchūān area • congee (rice porridge), sometimes served with pork and pídàn (century egg – egg that has been preserved and that has a green yolk) • Peking duck from Beijing (slices of crispy-skinned duck wrapped in a pancake).
<p>Games</p>	<p>Traditional games include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cat and mouse: children hold hands to make a circle. One child (the cat) stands outside the circle and another (the mouse) stands inside. The mouse weaves in and out of the circle, and the cat must follow their path and catch them. • Dragon's tail: this game needs a big group of children (at least ten). The children stand in a line to form a 'dragon', each with their hands on the shoulders of the child in front of them. To play the game, the child who is the dragon's 'head' has to try to touch the dragon's 'tail' (the last child in the chain). The other children in the chain try to stop them without breaking the chain. When the tail is caught, that child goes to the front of the line to become the head, and the game starts again.

<p>Places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chengdu Panda Base: a sanctuary for pandas where people can see baby pandas being raised. • The Forbidden City: located in Beijing, this was once the imperial palace. It was named the 'Forbidden City' because no-one could enter the palace without the emperor's permission. • The Great Wall of China: a long stone wall that stretches across China. • The Yangtze River: the longest river in Asia.
<p>Seasons</p>	<p>China is very large, and so the cold climate of the far north is very different to the tropical climate of the far south. Most of China experiences four seasons. Chinese people celebrate the different seasons with festivals such as the Spring and Mid-Autumn festivals. In Australia, the Spring festival is also known as Chinese New Year.</p>
<p>Traditions</p>	<p>These are just a small selection of China's many rich traditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese New Year (or the Spring Festival) is the most important festival in China. Most people take holidays at this time of the year to visit family and friends. • The dragon dance is performed by groups of people who hold poles to control a long dragon puppet made with silk and wood. It is often seen alongside lion dances (performed by people with lion puppets) during Chinese New Year. • Red envelopes containing money are often given as gifts at Chinese New Year and other special occasions, such as birthdays. The colour red is considered to be lucky. • During the Dragon Boat Festival, people race each other in boats shaped like dragons.

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Language experts agree that language learning is most effective when language and culture are linked. *The Polyglots* apps aim to spark children's interest in both French language and culture through play. This guide provides some general information about France and French culture and language that may be of interest to you and may extend children's learning.

About France

Metropolitan France, known as 'the hexagon' for its shape, is the largest country in Western Europe. It has borders with Belgium, Switzerland, Luxembourg, Italy, Germany and Spain. About 66 million people live there (in comparison, about 23 million people live in Australia). There are also overseas departments of France – French territory in places such as French Polynesia and New Caledonia in the Pacific Ocean.

Early childhood education in France

Nursery school in France caters for children 2–6 years old. It is part of the primary education system and there is a strong focus on structured learning in reading, writing and numbers as well as creative activities and games. More than 95 per cent of French children attend early childhood education.¹

Language

French is spoken by approximately 220 million people in 42 countries around the world. It is the second most widely learned language in the world after English. Originally, there were many regional French dialects, and outside 'the hexagon' there are many variations, such as African French, Vietnamese French and Canadian French. French is a gendered language, which means most nouns are masculine or feminine.

Culture

Many ethnic groups from former French colonies contribute to French culture, in particular to the rich variety of food available. North African couscous has become a national French dish. A large number of

French people are Roman Catholics but many other religions are practised in France.

Politeness and customs

- In France, say hello ('Bonjour monsieur' or 'Bonjour madame') when you first meet someone, and shake their hand. When you are leaving, say goodbye ('Au revoir') and shake their hand again.
- In a small shop you should say hello and goodbye to the person serving.
- When you first meet someone, use the formal address (vous) until asked to use the familiar form (tu). Likewise, don't use a given name until invited. However, adults always speak informally and use given names with children.
- Friends and family greet and farewell each other with a kiss on both cheeks. If someone offers their cheek, you are invited to this level of intimacy.
- Pointing or beckoning with your index finger is considered rude. Use your open hand to indicate.
- French children are expected to be well behaved in a social setting. There is no such thing as a 'children's menu' at a restaurant.

CULTURE IN THE POLYGLOTS APPS

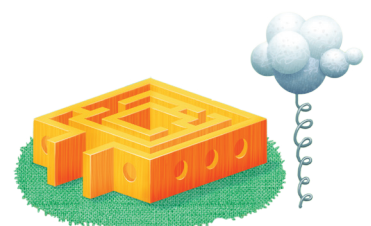
As children play with the apps, they can discover fun and intriguing French cultural references such as a croissant, cheese and snail (escargot). You can learn more about the cultural references in each app's overview support document (for example, *App 1: The Polyglots in the Playroom – French*).



¹ 'Education indicators in focus', OECD, 2013, www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/EDIF11.pdf

Interesting topics

<p>Animals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer and wild boar (relatives of domestic pigs) live in the forests. • Antelope and brown bears can be found in the mountains. • Millions of migrating birds stop over on the Mediterranean coastline, including thousands of pink flamingoes. • French people love pets, and can take their dogs to restaurants with them.
<p>Arts</p>	<p>France is rich in the arts, including dance, theatre, films, music, architecture, literature and painting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famous Impressionist artists include Monet and Renoir. • The singer Edith Piaf ('piaf' is slang for 'sparrow') is revered in France. • Tintin, Asterix and Obelix are popular French comic book characters. • <i>The Little Prince</i> is a well-loved illustrated book about a lonely young boy.
<p>Food</p>	<p>Food has a special role in French culture. Traditionally, meals were leisurely and had many courses but today long meals are for special occasions. Even so, sharing a meal with family every day is very important. French people shop daily for food, usually from local markets and small shops. Discussion about regional foods is common.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine and cheese are France's most famous products. There are more than 300 varieties of cheese and every region in France has its own specialties. • Famous French dishes include bouillabaisse (fish soup), quiche Lorraine and beef bourguignon (beef in red wine). • A bread stick (baguette) is eaten with every meal. • Hot chocolate is a common breakfast drink for children. • A croissant is a crescent-shaped French pastry that is often eaten for breakfast. It is made by folding butter into dough over and over before baking, so that the end result is very flaky.
<p>Sports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most popular game in France is football (soccer), followed by tennis. • The Tour de France bike race zigzags across France every summer. • Skiing is very popular in the French Alps in winter.
<p>Games</p>	<p>Traditional games include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • escargot: similar to hopscotch but in the shape of a snail • bilboquet: catching a ball that is attached by string to a cup • boules (or pétanque): throwing a large ball to come near a smaller one.



<p>Places</p>	<p>France is the most popular tourist destination in the world.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paris, the capital city of France, is known for its art galleries, museums, restaurants, markets, elegant shops and river cruises. • There are many parks and gardens where people stroll and meet. A lot of people live in apartments, especially in cities, so they are used to accessing public places, promenading in the streets and catching public transport. • Every summer, an artificial beach is created on the banks of the river Seine in Paris, complete with deck chairs and beach umbrellas. • The French Riviera is known for its mild climate and beautiful coastline. • Provence is famous for its fields of lavender flowers, its olives and its perfume.
<p>Famous monuments</p>	<p>Some of France's most visited sites are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arc de Triomphe: a powerful triumphal arch at the top of the Champs Élysées in Paris that honours those who have fought for France • Carcassonne: a fairytale castle, complete with turrets and moat, in south-west France • Eiffel Tower: an iconic pointed tower made of iron for the 1889 World's Fair in Paris • The Louvre: a massive art gallery containing the <i>Mona Lisa</i> by Leonardo Da Vinci as a star attraction • Notre Dame Cathedral: a Gothic building with towers and gargoyles • Pont du Gard: a huge Roman aqueduct in the south of France.
<p>Seasons</p>	<p>France is in the northern hemisphere. It has a cool, temperate climate but each region has a microclimate, with snow in the mountains and early spring in the south.</p>
<p>Traditions</p>	<p>These are just a small selection of France's many rich traditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bastille Day on 14 July, which commemorates the French revolution, is celebrated with fireworks. The French national song 'La Marseillaise' is often sung. The red, white and blue French flag (le Tricolore) is displayed everywhere. • On April Fools' day, children make paper fish and tape them secretly to other people's backs. • Easter is in spring in France and many traditions symbolise new life and renewal, such as giving decorated eggs and placing spring blossom around the house. • At French weddings, it is traditional for someone to chop the top off bottles of champagne with a sword.

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Language experts agree that language learning is most effective when language and culture are linked. *The Polyglots* apps aim to spark children's interest in both Indonesian language and culture through play. This guide provides some general information about Indonesia and Indonesian culture and language that may be of interest to you and may extend children's learning.

About Indonesia

Indonesia is made up of more than 18,000 islands and is one of Australia's closest neighbours. About 250 million people live there (in comparison, about 23 million people live in Australia). There are about 10 million people living in the capital city, Jakarta – nearly half the population of Australia occupying a city no more than 8 kilometres wide.

Early childhood education in Indonesia

Improving access to early childhood education has been a priority of the Indonesian government in recent years. In 2012, 37.8 per cent of children in Indonesia participated in early childhood education.¹

Language

Indonesia is home to hundreds of diverse peoples. Together, they speak almost 750 languages and dialects. In 1945, Indonesia declared independence, and Bahasa Indonesia became the official language. Bahasa Indonesian is taught in Indonesian schools and used by the Indonesian media and government. This is the language spoken in *The Polyglots* apps.

Culture

Indonesia is culturally diverse. Across the Indonesian archipelago there are about 300 ethnic groups, each with their own unique cultural practices. A large majority of people are Muslim and there are also many people who are Christian, Buddhist, Hindu and Animist.

Politeness and customs

- In Indonesia, the left hand is considered unclean. It is rude to use your left hand to pass someone food, drink or a gift.
- In Indonesia, you can point by using your right thumb and folding the other fingers against your palm. It is rude to point with your index finger.
- The polite way to beckon someone is with your right hand. Move your hand in a downward motion.
- In Indonesia, you take off your shoes when going into someone's house.
- In Indonesia, it is rude to show the soles of your feet or shoes. When sitting, you can point your feet down or put them flat on the floor.
- A person's head is considered sacred in Indonesia, so it is rude to touch someone on the head.

CULTURE IN THE POLYGLOTS APPS

As children play with the apps, they can discover fun and intriguing Indonesian cultural references to such things as an orangutan, a cicak lizard, rambutan fruit and an Indonesian mask. You can learn more about the cultural references in each app's overview support document (for example, *App 1: The Polyglots in the Playroom – Indonesian*).



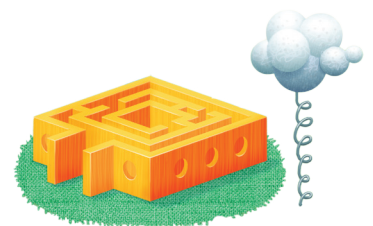
¹ 'Most children still have no access to early childhood education', *The Jakarta Post*, July 27 2013, www.thejakartapost.com/news/2013/07/27/most-children-still-have-no-access-early-education.html

Interesting topics

<p>Animals</p>	<p>The animals of Indonesia include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elephants • green sea turtles • komodo dragons • orangutans • rhinoceroses • slow lorises (small primates with big eyes and a toxic bite) • tarsiers (small primates with even bigger eyes and an appearance that some people may find creepy; they catch insect prey by jumping on them) • tigers.
<p>Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angklung (traditional bamboo instrument) • Batik and ikat (traditional techniques used to create textiles with beautiful patterns) • Gamelan (a traditional musical ensemble played with Indonesian instruments) • Wayang golek (wooden puppets) • Wayang kulit (shadow puppets)
<p>Food</p>	<p>The national dish of Indonesia is called nasi tumpeng. It is served on a plate with a big cone of rice in the centre. Surrounding the rice are lots of side dishes, which can include satays, vegetables, pickles, seafood and more.</p> <p>Other Indonesian foods include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gado gado (salad with peanut sauce) • nasi goreng (fried rice) • satay (meat skewers with peanut sauce) • kue lapis legit (layer cake, made by grilling each layer of the cake).
<p>Games</p>	<p>Traditional games include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • congklak (a board game played with shells, stones or seeds) • semut, orang, gajah (a game played with the right hand, similar to rock, paper scissors).
<p>Places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bali is a popular tourist destination, known for its temples, beaches, arts and crafts. • In Banjarmasin in Kalimantan, there is a floating market where people buy and sell from their boats. • Jakarta is the capital city of Indonesia. It has big shopping centres and theme parks such as Dunia Fantasi Theme Park (Ancol). • The island of Komodo is home to the Komodo dragon, the world's biggest lizard. There is a beach on Komodo called Pink Beach because of its pink coloured sand. • Lake Toba in Sumatra is the biggest volcanic lake in the world with an island in the middle that is almost as big as Singapore. Lake Toba was formed after a super volcano erupted about 75,000 years ago. • The Maluku (Spice) islands were once the only source in the world of the spices mace and nutmeg.

Seasons	Indonesia has a tropical climate – a wet season and a dry season. The dry season is generally around June to September. The rest of the year is wetter.
Traditional houses	<p>Across Indonesia, different areas have different traditional houses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long houses in Kalimantan • Minangkabau people’s houses with ‘spired’ roofs in West Sumatra • Batak people’s boat-shaped houses in North Sumatra • Compound houses in Bali • Tongkonan houses in Sulawesi
Traditions	<p>These are just a small selection of Indonesia’s many rich traditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In South Sulawesi, the Toraja people have elaborate funerals that can go for many days. • In Sumba, a ritual game celebrates the rice-planting season. In it, people throw spears at opponents while riding horses. • On the island of Nias, stone jumping is a manhood ritual where boys jump over a stone wall.

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Language experts agree that language learning is most effective when language and culture are linked. *The Polyglots* apps aim to spark children's interest in both Japanese language and culture through play. This guide provides some general information about Japan and Japanese culture and language that may be of interest to you and may extend children's learning.

About Japan

Japan is made up of nearly 7000 islands with a population of around 126 million (in comparison, about 23 million people live in Australia).

Early childhood education in Japan

Japan has a high rate of participation in early childhood education. In 2012, 79 per cent of 3-year-olds and 98 per cent of 5-year-olds were enrolled in early childhood education.¹

Language

Around the world, about 125 million people speak Japanese as a first or additional language. In Japan, there are several regional dialects of Japanese. The language spoken in *The Polyglots* apps is Standard Japanese (Nihongo).

Japanese writing systems

Japanese has three different writing systems:

- kanji (Chinese characters), used to write words borrowed from Chinese or to write Japanese words with the same or similar meanings
- hiragana, used for words without kanji representation
- katakana, used mostly for loan words from other languages.

The support materials for the Early Learning Languages Australia (ELLA) programme use rōmaji to represent Japanese with a Roman alphabet. For correct pronunciation, please listen to the words as they are spoken in the app.

Culture

Japan has a rich culture with many traditional art forms such as flower arrangement, dance, painting and poetry. Japan's popular culture is also very rich; it includes anime (Japanese animated films), manga (Japanese comics), street fashion and music.

Politeness and customs

In general, politeness and respect for elders are important aspects of Japanese culture.

- In Japan, children can address their teachers as [Surname]-'sensei'. For example, Suzuki-sensei.
- An educator can address young children as [Given name]-'chan'. For example Yuka-chan.
- In Japan, children can greet their teachers by bowing and saying 'Sensei, konnichiwa'.
- Before eating a meal in Japan, people say 'itadakimasu' (I receive).

CULTURE IN THE POLYGLOTS APPS

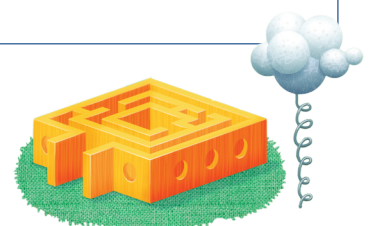
As children play with the apps, they can discover some fun and intriguing Japanese cultural references such as a sushi roll, ninja, kokeshi doll and cherry blossom. You can learn more about the cultural references in each app's overview support document (for example, *App 1: The Polyglots in the Playroom – Japanese*).



¹ Taguma M, Litjens I and Makowiecki K, 'Quality matters in early childhood education and care: Japan', OECD, 2012, <http://www.oecd.org/japan/JAPAN%20policy%20profile%20-%20published%2028-09-2012.pdf>

Interesting topics

<p>Animals</p>	<p>The animals of Japan include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • brown bears • Japanese macaques, also known as snow monkeys because they live in snowy climates: in some parts of Japan, you can find macaques bathing in the hot springs • raccoon dogs (an animal with a raccoon-like appearance in the same family as dogs and wolves) • sea otters • serows (furry animals in the same family as sheep and goats).
<p>Arts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ikebana flower arrangement is minimalist and often small in scale. Leaves and stems are treated as features as well as flowers. • Kabuki is traditional Japanese theatre with music and dance. • Painting. • Calligraphy: in Japan, there is a long tradition of writing beautifully using an ink-and-wash technique. • Origami is the art of paper folding. • Haiku is a form of short poetry. In traditional haiku, the first line has five syllables, the second seven and the third five. Children may like 'What am I?' haikus. For example: 'I live on a farm / eating grass in the pastures / snug in my white wool'. • Kimonos are traditional clothes worn by Japanese women and sometimes men. They are robes that are wrapped around the body. The fabric for women's kimonos is often highly decorated with painting or embroidery.
<p>Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bento boxes are usually eaten at lunchtime. The boxes often have several compartments, each containing a small dish (eg rice, beef or chicken, pickles, salad and fruit). Some people put a lot of effort into making their bento boxes look cute (eg by making rice balls look like animals). • Onigiri is a ball of plain or salted rice with a stuffing such as fish or vegetables. It is wrapped in nori (seaweed). It is often shaped into a triangle, and is designed to be easily portable. • Sushi is vinegared rice with raw or cooked fish, vegetables or meat. It is often presented as a roll wrapped in nori. It may come with pickled ginger, soy sauce and wasabi. • Tempura is battered and deep fried vegetables or seafood.
<p>Games</p>	<p>Traditional games include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • otedama – a game traditionally played by girls. It involves throwing small beanbags (traditionally made from kimono scraps) • kendama – a traditional wooden toy that has a ball attached to a handle by string. The aim is to toss the ball and then catch it with the handle.



<p>Places</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mt Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan, and is an active volcano. The top of Mt Fuji is often covered in snow. • In Nara, wild deer (shika) wander Nara Park and sometimes even the city streets. • The Imperial Palace in Tokyo is home to Japan’s emperor, the country’s symbolic head of state. • Kinkaku-ji is a golden Buddhist temple located in a beautiful garden in Kyoto. • Osaka’s aquarium is one of the largest in the world. Each section has sea creatures from a different part of the world.
<p>Seasons</p>	<p>Japan has four seasons. Japanese people celebrate the different seasons with festivals such as the cherry blossom festival in spring.</p>
<p>Traditions</p>	<p>These are just a small selection of Japan’s many rich traditions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Japan, March 3 is ‘Doll’s Day’ or ‘Girls’ Day’. Families display dolls on platforms covered in a red cloth. The dolls represent the emperor, empress and their court. • Children’s day is May 5. Families fly ‘koinobori’ streamers with fish-shaped windsocks to celebrate.

Note: This document contains content that has been gathered through independent research and consultation with subject matter experts. The figures and information included in this document should be reviewed for accuracy over time.