

Who Speaks Yoruba?

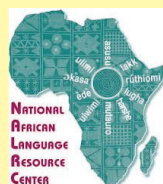
Yoruba is the first language of approximately 50 million West Africans, and is spoken by populations in Southwestern and Central Nigeria, Benin, Togo, Ghana, Ivory Coast and Sierra Leone. It is also one of the most prominent languages and cultures of the diaspora, and greatly impacts the social, cultural and religious lives of millions of people in countries outside Africa, like Brazil, Venezuela, Cuba, Trinidad and Tobago, and Haiti, and in places like Oyotunji in South Carolina, USA. Yoruba culture, which centers around religion, is one of the surviving African elements in these countries, as one can clearly see in the òrìṣà (orisha) tradition candomble and the feature of syncretism in Brazil, as well as in other religious practices in the United States and elsewhere.

Some Famous People of Yoruba Descent

Ajayi Crowther: first African Anglican bishop
Obafemi Awolowo: nationalist, political leader
Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti: activist
MKO Abiola: business mogul
Olusegun Obasanjo: former president of Nigeria
Bola Tinubu: political leader
D.O. Fagunwa: pioneer of Yoruba language novel
Wole Soyinka: playwright, Nobel laureate
Gani Fawehinmi: human & civil rights lawyer
Folorunso Alakija: billionaire
Fela Kuti: Afrobeat musician and activist
King Sunny Ade: Juju musician
Femi Falana: lawyer, human rights activist
Tunde Kelani: filmmaker
Anthony Joshua: boxer
Tomi Adeyemi: novelist
Hakeem Olajuwon: basketball all-star
David Oyelowo: actor
Sade Baderinwa: TV news anchor
Zeynab Abib: singer of world music
Emmanuel Adebayor: soccer player
Funke Akindele: actress
Tope Alabi: Yoruba language gospel singer

Interesting Facts about Yoruba Culture

- Ifa, the Yoruba divination system, is among UNESCO's Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.
- Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove in the Yoruba city of Osogbo is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- The first TV station in Africa, Western Nigeria Television (now, Nigerian Television Authority) was built in Ibadan, a Yoruba city.
- Yoruba people hold twin children in high esteem, and Igboora, a town in Oyo State, Nigeria is said to have the highest number of twins in the world.
- The Yoruba traditional drum, gangan, is called talking drum because a master player is able to change the pitch of the drum head while playing to mimic tonality of speech.
- Lagos, a Yoruba city, is the most populated city in Africa.
- Nollywood, the world's second largest film industry, has Lagos as its main production and market base.



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YORUBA



Oduduwa: Yoruba people believe that they are descendants of Oduduwa, the mythical founder of the first Earth at Ile-Ife.

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Why Study Yoruba?

Students cite many reasons for studying Yoruba, including personal interest in West African cultures, research interests and fulfillment of foreign language requirements. African-American students often study Yoruba out of interest in their own heritage, since many of the slaves brought to North America during the 18th and 19th centuries came from Yoruba-speaking areas.

For students of comparative linguistics and socio-linguistics, a study of Yoruba can help yield astounding results through an examination of the various changes and differences that occur between the language and the culture in the home base and the diaspora. Students of African literatures would also benefit from studying Yoruba language, literature and culture, as many notable African writers, such as Wole Soyinka, are Yoruba. Moreover, Yoruba is one of the most studied and researched African languages. There are already two volumes of Yoruba Metalanguage, and Yoruba is now being used for serious academic discourses such as Masters and Ph.D. degree theses in some parts of Africa. Its importance as an African language cannot be overemphasized.

Due to the number of people for whom Yoruba is the first language, the political, cultural and social importance of the language within Africa; and the United States' national interest tied to economic and diplomatic relations with Yoruba-speaking areas, Yoruba was recognized among the Less Commonly Taught Languages as a first priority language by a national panel of African language teachers.

Learn these everyday Phrases!

- Welcome: **Ẹ káàbò**
- Well done: **Ẹ kúúṣẹ**
- How are you?: **Báwo ni?**
- I am fine: **Dáadáa ni.**
- Thank you: **Ẹ ṣé** (formal) **O ṣé** (informal)
- And you: **Íwọ ńkọ?** (formal) **Ẹyin ńkọ** (informal)
- What is your name?:
Kíni orúkọ ẹ? (informal)
Kíni orúkọ yin? (formal)
- My name is _____
Orúkọ mi ni _____
- My pleasure/Don't mention it:
Kò tọ'pẹ
- Goodbye: **Ó dàbò**
- Morning greeting: **Ẹ káàárò**
- Afternoon greeting: **Ẹ káàsán**
- Evening greeting: **Ẹ kúròlẹ**
- Bedtime parting phrase: **Ó dàárò**



African countries where Yoruba is spoken



Ooni (king) of Ife, Yoruba's place of origin



Alaafin (king) of Oyo, the military capital of the Yoruba



Egungun masquerade in Oyotunji, South Carolina



Titilayo Oyinbo, a famous American student of Yoruba



Guests flank the bride and the groom at a traditional Yoruba wedding in Nigeria



Yoruba drummers

Studying Yoruba in the United States:

Please check the "Language Inventory" menu on NALRC website.