

# Albanian (shqip / gjuha shqipe)

Albanian is an Indo-European language which forms its own branch in the Indo-European family and has no close relatives. It is spoken by about 7.6 million people, mainly in Albania and Kosovo, and also in parts of Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

## Origins

Albanian is thought by some scholars to be a descendent of Illyrian, a group of Indo-European languages spoken in the Western Balkans until perhaps the 6th century AD. Others believe that Albanian descended from Thracian or Dacian, Indo-European languages spoken in parts of the Balkans until about the 5th century AD.

## Albanian at a glance

- **Native name:** shqip [ʃcip]; gjuha shqipe [ˈɟuha ˈʃcipɛ]
- **Linguistic affiliation:** Indo-European; Albanian
- **Number of speakers:** c. 7.6 million
- **Spoken in:** Albania, Kosovo, Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia
- **First written:** 15th century AD
- **Writing system:** Latin alphabet (in the past: the Greek, Arabic, Elbasan, Beitha Kukju and Todhri alphabets)
- **Status:** Official language in Albania and Kosovo. Recognised minority language in Italy, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia

## Linguistic influences

Albanian absorbed some words from Greek and many words from Latin between the 2nd century BC and the 5th century AD. After that it was influenced by the languages of Slavic and Germanic tribes who settled in the Balkans. There were also borrowings from the Proto-Romanians or Vlachs from the 9th century AD.

## Dialects

There are two main dialects of Albanian: Tosk (*Toskësisht*) and Gheg/Geg (*Gegnisht*). The dividing line between them is the Shkumbin river. Tosk is the official language of Albania, and one of the official languages of Kosovo and Macedonia, and is spoken in southern Albania, Turkey, Greece and Italy. Gheg is spoken in northern Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Bulgaria. The dialects are more or less mutually intelligible, and transitional varieties of Albanian are spoken in central Albania.

## Written Albanian

Albanian has been written with various alphabet since the 15th century. Originally the Tosk dialect was written with the [Greek](#) alphabet, while the Gheg dialect was written with the [Latin](#) alphabet. They have both also been written with the Turkish version of the [Arabic](#) alphabet. The Latin alphabet for Albanian was standardised in 1909, and a unified literary version of Albanian, based on the Tosk dialect, was established in 1972.

Albanian has also been written with a number of other alphabets, including [Elbasan](#), [Beitha Kukju](#) and [Todhri](#), local inventions which appeared during the 18th and 19th centuries, but were not widely used.

## Albanian alphabet and pronunciation

### Tosk dialect (Toskësisht)

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	Dh dh	E e	Ë ë	F f
a	bë	cë	çë	dë	dhë	e	ë	fë
[a]	[b]	[ts]	[tʃ]	[d]	[ð]	[ɛ]	[ə]	[f]
G g	Gj gj	H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	Ll ll	M m
gë	gjë	hë	i	jë	kë	lë	llë	më
[g]	[j]	[h]	[i, j]	[j]	[k]	[l]	[l]	[m]
N n	Nj nj	O o	P p	Q q	R r	Rr rr	S s	Sh sh
në	një	o	pë	që	rë	rrë	së	shë
[n]	[ɲ]	[ɔ]	[p]	[c]	[r]	[r]	[s]	[ʃ]
T t	Th th	U u	V v	X x	Xh xh	Y y	Z z	Zh zh
të	thë	u	vë	xë	xhë	y	zë	zhë
[t]	[θ]	[u]	[v]	[ɬ]	[ɬʒ]	[y]	[z]	[ʒ]

[Hear a recording of the Albanian alphabet by Plator Gashi](#)

### Gheg dialect (Gegnisht)

The main phonological differences between Gheg and Tosk are in the pronunciation of vowels, and that Gheg uses nasalization. Here are the Gheg vowels:

## Vowels

a	â	ă	e	ê	ë	i	o	ô
[a]	[ɑ]	[ɒ]	[e]	[ɛ]	[ə]	[i]	[o]	[ɔ]
u	y	ã	ẽ	ĩ	õ	ũ	ỹ	
[u]	[y]	[ã]	[ẽ]	[ĩ]	[õ]	[ũ]	[ỹ]	

See also: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Gheg\\_Albanian#Example\\_for\\_the\\_vowel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Talk:Gheg_Albanian#Example_for_the_vowel)

[Download Albanian alphabet charts](#) (Excel)

## Sample text (Tosk)

Të gjithë njerëzit lindin të lirë dhe të barabartë në dinjitet dhe në të drejta. Ata kanë arsye dhe ndërgjegje dhe duhet të sillen ndaj njëri tjetrit me frymë vëllazërimi.

[Hear a recording of this text by Plator Gashi](#)

## Sample text (Gheg)

Zhdo njeri kan le t'lir më njëjit dinjitet edhë dreta. Ata jan të pajisun më mënjê edhë vet-dijê edhë duhën të veprôjn ka njëni-tjetrin më nji shpirt vllâznimit.

*Translation by Gazmen Arifi from Skopje/Shkupi*

[Hear a recording of this text by Granit Studenica](#)

## Translation

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

*(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)*

## Sample videos

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