

# English Learners Around the World

## Cultural and Linguistic Resources for English Learners in Connecticut



# AFGHANISTAN

**Capital:** Kabul

**Climate:** Varied

**Language(s):** Dari (Persian) and Pashto are the official languages of Afghanistan, making bilingualism very common.

**Form of government:** Islamic Republic

**Conflict:** Decades of war and violence have made Afghanistan one of the worlds the largest producers of refugees and asylum seekers.

**Popular religion:** Over 99% of the Afghan population is Muslim: approximately 80–85% follow the Sunni sect, 15–19% are Shi'a, and 1% other.

**Education system profile:** Literacy rate of the entire population is low, around 28%. Female literacy may be as low as 10%.

**Quality of life:** According to the Human Development Index, Afghanistan is the 15th least developed country in the world. The average life expectancy was estimated in 2012 to be 49.72 years.

**Cultural Point:** The Afghan culture has been around for over two millennia. It is mostly a nomadic and tribal society, with different regions of the country having their own tradition, reflecting the multi-cultural and multi-lingual character of the nation.



Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Pashto	/v/ vet ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the	/ʊ/ book /æ/ cat /ʌ/ up /əʊ/ show /iə/ here /tʊə/ tourist /ɔɪ/ coin/ /eə/ hair /aʊ/ mouth /ɔɪ/ coin/	-Alphabet is Pashto alphabet that comes from Arabic -15% of the population of Afghanistan speaks Pashto as a first language. -Only used in elementary schools. -Subject-verb-object sentence order -Noun precedes adjective -Possessors precedes the possessed item

# ARGENTINA

**Capital:** Buenos Aires

**Continent:** South America

**Climate:** Mostly temperate, but subtropical in the north and arid/sub-Antarctic in the south.

**Language(s):** Spanish, Italian, German, French, and English are spoken, due to European and U.S. influences. Quechua, Tehuelche, and Guarani are indigenous languages.

**Form of government:** Republic (Independence in 1816)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** None recently.

**Education system profile:** Girls in Argentina go to school for an average of 17 years; boys go for an average of 15 years. School year runs March to November. Grades are given on a 0 to 10 scale, with 10 being the highest and 4 being a passing grade.

**Quality of life:** Generally high. Population is mostly highly educated.

**Cultural point:** Direct eye contact is favored over indirect, with sustained direct eye contact while talking. Maintaining eye contact is viewed as sense of respect and interest in the person who is speaking. Standing with one's hands on his hips may signify anger, boredom, and/or a challenge.



Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /ɛ/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English

# BANGLADESH



**Capital:** Dhaka

**Continent:** Asia

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** The official state language is Bengali.

**Form of government:** Bangladesh is a parliamentary democracy, with an elected parliament called the Jatiyo Sangshad.

**Conflict:** Political unrest and poverty.

**Popular religion:** The main religion in Bangladesh is Islam (89.7%), but a significant percentage of the population adheres to Hinduism (9.2%).

**Education system profile:** Education is mainly offered in Bengali, but English is also commonly taught and used. Article 17 of the Bangladesh Constitution provides that all children between the ages of six and ten years receive a basic education free of charge.

**Quality of life:** Malnutrition has been a persistent problem for the poverty-stricken country. 26% of the population are undernourished and 46% of the children suffers from moderate to severe underweight problem.

**Cultural Point:** Bangladesh has a culture that encompasses elements both old and new. The Bengali language boasts a rich literary heritage, which Bangladesh shares with the Indian state of West Bengal.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Bengali	/ŋ/ sing /tʃ/ chair, nature /w/ water /p/ pen /t/ ten /k/ cat /f/ fun /v/ vet	/ə/ about, supply /ʌ/ up /ɜ/ her /ɛ/ met /ɑ/ saw /ʊ/ book	-Sentence order Subject, Object, Verb -No long vowels - Many diphthongs possible (at least 25), including combinations of the vowel sound and its off-glide sound (trailing vowel). -Stress comes on the first syllable of each word -Seven vowels are nasalized - Limited beginning consonant clusters -Written words have a bar that combine all letters in a word -Finite verbs are not conjugated. Non-finite verbs are conjugated - /e/ and /æ/ have very little difference - One word generally has one meaning

# BOLIVIA



**Capital:** La Paz

**Continent:** South America

**Climate:** Varies with altitude: from humid and tropical to semi-arid and cold.

**Language(s):** Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara are official languages. Quechua, Aymara, and Guarani are indigenous languages.

**Form of government:** Plurinational State (Independence in 1825)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** President Morales has implemented a number of changes, including a new constitution. Each new change often result in mass protests by either the indigenous populations or the major gas companies.

**Education system profile:** School year is February to November, with winter vacation in July. Grades are on a 0-100 scales, with failing grades below 51. About 20% of population has received no formal education.

**Quality of life:** Least developed country in South America. Over two-thirds live in poverty. Literacy rate: 75%.

**Cultural point:** Bolivians tend to stand close to one another while talking (one to two feet). It can be considered rude to back away from someone while they are speaking. Direct eye contact is preferred over indirect. Maintaining eye contact creates an atmosphere of trust and respect.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /ɛ/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English



# BRAZIL



**Capital:** Brasilia

**Continent:** South America

**Climate:** Mostly tropical or semitropical with temperate zone in the south.

**Language(s):** Portuguese, Spanish, English, French

**Form of government:** Federal Republic (Independence in 1822)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** There has been a huge growth in urban populations, causing serious social, security, environmental, and political problems for major cities. Current president a huge advocate of human rights, social inclusion, gender equality, and transparent government.

**Education system profile:** Girls and boys go to school for an average of 14 years. Mostly lectures.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate of 90.3%. Low unemployment. Has one of the most advanced industrial sectors in Latin America.

**Cultural point:** Tend to be direct in most situations. Light touching and close proximity are construed as signs of general friendship. Brazilians favor direct eye contact over indirect. They view time as something flexible. Communication is often informal.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Portuguese	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /tʃ/ <b>chair, nature</b> /t/ <b>tin</b> /r/ <b>ready</b> /w/ <b>water</b> /dʒ/ <b>wage, judge</b>	/ʊ/ <b>book</b> /æ/ <b>cat</b> /ʌ/ <b>up</b> /ɪ/ <b>ship</b> /ɒ/ <b>not</b> /ə/ <b>about, supply</b> /ɪə/ <b>here</b> /əʊ/ <b>show</b> /tʊə/ <b>tourist</b>	-All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Adjectives follow nouns -'Do' does not exist -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -Negatives formed by putting 'no' before the verb (e.g. He no would like it.) -Adverbs can separate a verb from its object (e.g. I like very much my teacher.) -Why and because are the same word -The word <i>obrigado</i> , thank you in English, can mean a polite refusal

# BURUNDI



**Capital:** Bujumbura

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** Kirundi French and Kirundi Swahili.

**Form of government:** Republic

**Popular religion:** Christian, Muslim, localized Indigenous Religions

**Conflict:** Genocide, Civil War, Political unrest occurred throughout the region, in part, because of social differences between the Tutsi and Hutu, provoking civil war in Burundi throughout the middle twentieth century.

**Education system profile:** Kirundi, French, and Swahili are spoken throughout Burundi. Burundi's literacy rate is low, due to low school attendance. Ten percent of Burundian boys are allowed a secondary education.

**Quality of life:** Lowest per capita gross income in the world. Burundi is one of the five poorest countries in the world. Burundi has a low gross domestic product largely due to civil wars, corruption, poor access to education, and the effects of HIV/AIDS.

**Cultural Point:** Since farming is the main industry in Burundi, a typical Burundian meal consists of sweet potatoes, corn, and peas. Due to the expense, meat is eaten only a few times per month.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
French	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /ŋ/ sing /dʒ/ wage, judge /tʃ/ chair, nature /r/ right /h/ hot	/ɪ/ ship /ʌ/ up /ɔ:/ door /æ/ cat /ʊ/ book /əʊ/ show /iə/ here /tʊə/ tourist /ɔɪ/ coin/ /eə/ hair /aɪ/ like /aʊ/ mouth	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicates the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in French, instead of I am hungry in English)

# CHINA



**Capital:** Beijing (Peking)

**Continent:** Asia

**Climate:** Varied

**Language(s):** The most spoken varieties are Mandarin (spoken by over 70% of the population), Wu (includes Shanghainese), Yue (includes Cantonese and Taishanese), Min (includes Hokkien and Teochew), Xiang, Gan, and Hakka.

**Form of government:** Nominally Marxist-Leninist single-party state

**Popular religion:** Buddhism remains the most popular religion in China since its introduction in the 1st century. Christianity is increasing significantly in China.

**Conflict:** Political, economic, and religious persecution.

**Education system profile:** Free compulsory education in China consists of elementary school and middle school, which lasts for 9 years (ages 6–15); almost all children in urban areas continue with three years of high school.

**Quality of life:** As of 2012, China's national average life expectancy at birth is 74.8 years, and its infant mortality rate is 15.6 per thousand births. China's large population and densely populated cities have led to serious disease outbreaks in recent years, such as the 2003 outbreak of SARS, although this has since been largely contained.

**Cultural Point:** Today there are 56 distinct recognized ethnic groups in China. In terms of numbers however, Han Chinese is by far the largest group. Most social values are derived from Confucianism and Taoism.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
Chinese	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /l/ <b>light</b> /r/ <b>right</b> /b/ <b>bill</b> /v/ <b>voice</b> /h/ <b>hot</b> /d/ <b>data</b> /z/ <b>rise</b> /ʃ/ <b>push</b> /tʃ/ <b>chair, nature</b> /ŋ/ <b>sing</b> /n/ <b>spoon</b> /dʒ/ <b>wage, judge</b>	/æ/ <b>cat</b> /ɒ/ <b>not</b> /u:/ <b>fool</b> /ʌ/ <b>up</b>	-Tonal language -Adjectives follow nouns -No prefixes or suffixes -Context is crucial to meaning -Symbols represent words- can cause issues with visual decoding -Verbs are not conjugated -No consonant blends -Most words do not end in consonants - /r/ and /l/ are interchangeable



# COLOMBIA



**Capital:** Bogotá

**Continent:** South America

**Climate:** Tropical on coast and eastern grasslands, cooler in highlands.

**Language(s):** Spanish

**Form of government:** Constitutional Republic (Independence in 1810)

**Popular religion:** Catholic

**Conflict:** Ongoing conflict between government and leftist military group the FARC with violence on both sides.

**Education system profile:** Free and compulsory for first 5 years. Primary basic: 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grade/6-10 years old. Secondary basic: 6<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Middle vocational: 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades. May be from February to November or from August to June.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate: 93%. Around 37% of Colombians live below the poverty line, and the country continues to face large income disparities and inadequate social services.

**Cultural point:** They tend to speak relatively loudly and use hand gestures. Beckoning or pointing with the index finger is considered bad form. Many people care what others might think or how they might react, so they are usually careful not to offend.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /i/ ship /ε/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English

# DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of the CONGO



**Capital:** Kinshasa

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** French is the official language. There are an estimated total of 242 languages spoken in the country. Out of these, only four have the status of national languages: Kikongo (Kituba), Lingala, Tshiluba and Swahili.

**Form of government:** Presidential Republic

**Popular religion:** Christianity (96%), Animism 0.7%

**Conflict:** Despite the signing of peace accords in 2003, fighting continues in the east of the country. In eastern Congo, the prevalence of rape and other sexual violence is described as the worst in the world.

**Education system profile:** As a result of the 6-year civil war, over 5.2 million children in the country receive no education.

**Quality of life:** Congo has the world's second-highest rate of infant mortality (after Chad).

**Cultural Point:** Since the late 19th century, traditional ways of life have undergone changes brought about by colonialism, the struggle for independence, the stagnation of the Mobutu era, and most recently, the First and Second Congo Wars. The country's 60 million inhabitants are mainly rural. The 30 percent who live in urban areas have been the most open to Western influences.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
French	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /ŋ/ sing /dʒ/ wage, judge /tʃ/ chair, nature /r/ right /h/ hot	/ɪ/ ship /ʌ/ up /ɔ:/ door /æ/ cat /ʊ/ book /əʊ/ show /ɪə/ here /tʊə/ tourist /ɔɪ/ coin/ /eə/ hair /aɪ/ like /aʊ/ mouth	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicates the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in French, instead of I am hungry in English)

# DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



**Capital:** Santo Domingo

**Continent:** Caribbean

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** Spanish

**Form of government:** Representative Democracy  
(Independence in 1844)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** None recently.

**Education system profile:** Primary education is officially free and compulsory for children between the ages of 5 and 14, although those who live in isolated areas have limited access to schooling. Primary schooling is followed by a 2-year intermediate school and a 4-year secondary course, after which a diploma called the *bachillerato* (high school diploma) is awarded.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate: 84.7%. 40% live in poorer rural areas.

**Cultural point:** Humor and laughter play a big role in communicating. Dominicans prefer standing close to one another while talking. During conversations direct eye contact is commonplace rather than sporadic as it shows a sign of interest and respect towards the speaker. Dominicans tend to be quite open and direct in conversations.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /ɛ/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English

# ECUADOR



**Capital:** Quito

**Continent:** South America

**Climate:** Varied: Mild year-round in the mountain valleys, hot and humid in coastal and Amazonian jungle lowlands.

**Language(s):** Spanish. Quichua and Shuar are official languages of intercultural communication.

**Form of government:** Republic (Independence in 1822)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** None recently.

**Education system profile:** Compulsory for ages 5-18. Based on a 40 point system with 40 as the highest.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate: 84.2%. Highly stratified society.

**Cultural point:** Ecuadorians are generally comfortable standing close to one another while talking. Maintaining eye contact is expected and not doing so is considered impolite.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /ɛ/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English

# EGYPT

**Capital:** Cairo

**Climate:** Varied.

**Language(s):** The official language is Modern Standard Arabic. The spoken languages are: Egyptian Arabic (68%), Sa'idi Arabic (29%), Eastern Egyptian Bedawi Arabic (1.6%), Sudanese Arabic (0.6%), Domari (0.3%), Nobiin (0.3%), Beja (0.1%), Siwi and others.

**Form of government:** Republic

**Popular religion:** Predominantly Sunni Muslim. Islam is the state religion.

**Conflict:** Human Rights Violations (On 25 January 2011, widespread protests began against Mubarak's government. The objective of the protest was the removal of Mubarak from power.)

**Education system profile:** Although significant progress has been made to increase human capital base through improved education system, still the quality of education experience is low and unequally distributed.

**Quality of life:** Living standards in Egypt are low by international standards, and have declined consistently since 1990.

**Cultural Point:** Islam is practiced by the majority of Egyptians and governs their personal, political, economic and legal lives.



Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
Arabic	/p/ pen /g/ go /tʃ/ chair, nature /v/ voice /ŋ/ sing /ʒ/ measure /r/ ready	/e/ met /ʌ/ up /ɒ/ not /ɔ:/ door /ɜ:/ her /ə/ about, supply /eə/ hair /aɪ/ like /tʊə/ tourist /kɔ/ coin/ /iə/ here /əʊ/ show	-Text is read from right to left -No capital letters -Nouns are masculine and feminine -Most students in the Arab world start learning English in fourth grade -No short vowels -Consonant clusters are not common and can cause pronunciation and writing errors (e.g. <i>split</i> becomes <i>spilit</i> ) -No <i>to be</i> form in the present tense can cause errors (e.g. I flying to Egypt. or Where he going?) -Adjectives follow the nouns



# ERITREA



**Capital:** Asmara

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Varied.

**Language(s):** Many languages are spoken in Eritrea today. There is no official language, as the Constitution establishes the "equality of all Eritrean languages, but Tigrinya and Arabic are the two predominant languages for official purposes.

**Form of government:** Single Party Presidential Republic

**Popular religion:** Christianity and Islam

**Conflict:** In 1998 a border dispute with Ethiopia led to the two year long Eritrean–Ethiopian War.

**Education system profile:** Student-teacher ratios are high: 45 to 1 at the elementary level and 54 to 1 at the secondary level. Learning hours at school are often less than six hours per day. Illiteracy estimates for Eritrea range from around 40% to as high as 70%.

**Quality of life:** Several human rights violations are committed by the government or on behalf of the government. Freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association are limited.

**Cultural Point:** Traditional Eritrean dress is quite varied, with the women of most lowland ethnicities traditionally dressing in brightly colored clothes, while the Tigrinya traditionally dress in bright white costumes. Of the Muslim ethnicities, only the Arab or Rashaida tribeswomen maintain a tradition of covering their faces.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Tigrinya	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /v/ <b>vet</b>	/ʌ/ <b>up</b> /ə/ <b>about, supply</b> /ɪ/ <b>ship</b> /æ/ <b>cat</b> /ʊ/ <b>book</b> /ɒ/ <b>not</b> /eə/ <b>hair</b> /aɪ/ <b>like</b> /tʊə/ <b>tourist</b> /ɔɪ/ <b>coin/</b> /ɪə/ <b>here</b> /əʊ/ <b>show</b>	-Nouns are masculine or feminine -Making nouns plural is not necessary when the context suggests plurality -Noun suffixes show possession -Suffixes show verb tense -Negatives are expressed through a prefix -Gerunds are used to denote past tense at times -Written in Ge'ez script where each symbol represents a consonant+vowel

# GUINEA



**Capital:** Conakry

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** French is the official language of Guinea, and is the main language of communication in schools, government administration, the media, and the country's security forces. More than twenty-four indigenous languages are also spoken, of which the most common are Fula, Susu and Mandinka.

**Form of government:** Presidential Republic

**Popular religion:** Predominantly Islamic (85%)

**Conflict:** Political unrest / violence.

**Education system profile:** The literacy rate of Guinea is one of the lowest in the world: in 2003 it was estimated that only 29.5% of adults were literate (42.6% of males and 18.1% of females). Primary education is compulsory for 8 years, but most children do not attend for so long, and many do not go to school at all. Children, particularly girls, are kept out of school in order to assist their parents with domestic work or agriculture.

**Quality of life:** Poverty and under employment.

**Cultural Point:** Like other West African countries, Guinea has a rich musical tradition.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
French	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /ŋ/ <b>sing</b> /dʒ/ <b>wage, judge</b> /tʃ/ <b>chair, nature</b> /r/ <b>right</b> /h/ <b>hot</b>	/ɪ/ <b>ship</b> /ʌ/ <b>up</b> /ɔ:/ <b>door</b> /æ/ <b>cat</b> /ʊ/ <b>book</b> /əʊ/ <b>show</b> /ɪə/ <b>here</b> /tʊə/ <b>tourist</b> /ɔɪ/ <b>coin/</b> /eə/ <b>hair</b> /aɪ/ <b>like</b> /aʊ/ <b>mouth</b>	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicates the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in French, instead of I am hungry in English)

# IRAQ



**Capital:** Baghdad

**Continent:** Asia

**Climate:** Varied

**Language(s):** Arabic is the majority language. Kurdish is spoken by approximately 20% of the population. South Azeri (called Turkmen locally) by 5–10% and Assyrian Neo-Aramaic by 3–5%.

**Form of government:** Federal parliamentary republic

**Conflict:** War: considerable violence remains between various political and sectarian factions in Iraq.

**Popular religion:** Iraq is a Muslim country, with a mixed Shi'a and Sunnis population. Most sources estimate that around 65% of the population in Iraq is Shi'a and around 35% of the population is Sunni.

**Education system profile:** Education has suffered as a result of war, sanctions, and instability.

**Quality of life:** Some one million people remain displaced throughout the country, of which hundreds of thousands live in dire conditions. Most are unable to return to their areas of origin because of the volatile security situation, the destruction of their homes, or lack of access to services.

**Cultural Point:** As in other Middle Eastern nations, the left hand is used for sanitary activities including the restroom, and the right hand is used for food and greeting; offering to shake with the left hand may be perceived as an insult, and eating with the left hand embarrassing.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
Arabic	/p/ pen /g/ go /tʃ/ chair, nature /v/ voice /ŋ/ sing /ʒ/ measure /r/ ready	/e/ met /ʌ/ up /ɒ/ not /ɔ:/ door /ɜ:/ her /ə/ about, supply /eə/ hair /aɪ/ like /tʊə/ tourist /ɔɪ/ coin/ /ɪə/ here /əʊ/ show	-Text is read from right to left -No capital letters -Nouns are masculine and feminine -Most students in the Arab world start learning English in fourth grade -No short vowels -Consonant clusters are not common and can cause pronunciation and writing errors (e.g. <i>split</i> becomes <i>spilit</i> ) -No <i>to be</i> form in the present tense can cause errors (e.g. I flying to Egypt. or Where he going?) -Adjectives follow the nouns

# MEXICO



**Capital:** Mexico City

**Continent:** North America

**Climate:** Tropical to desert

**Language(s):** Spanish and various indigenous languages.

**Form of government:** Federal Republic (Independence in 1810)

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** Recently, increasing violence from drug cartels in certain areas.

**Education system profile:** Compulsory for 11 years.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate: 91.4%. Large urban concentration, underdeveloped southern states, crowded central plateau, industrialized urban areas on US-Mexico border.

**Cultural point:** When children are in trouble they look down and if they look at the adult directly in the eyes it can be seen as disrespectful and a challenge. The expectation concerning time is that people are going to arrive late.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ this, think /θ/ thing, the /dʒ/ wage, judge /ŋ/ sing /z/ rise /ʃ/ push /v/ voice /h/ hot	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /ɛ/ met /æ/ cat /ɔ/ saw	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -'s' on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with 'have' instead of 'be' (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like 'sp' 'st' 'sk' don't exist without the initial 'e,' so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces 'esp' 'est' or 'esk' - Possessive is formed without the 's. Instead it uses 'of' - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English

# PUERTO RICO



**Capital:** San Juan

**Continent:** Caribbean

**Climate:** Tropical

**Language(s):** Puerto Rican Spanish and English are both official languages.

**Form of government:** Unincorporated territory of the U.S.

**Popular religion:** Roman Catholic

**Conflict:** Independence movement, but no violent conflicts.

**Education system profile:** Three levels—Primary (elementary school grades 1–6), Secondary (intermediate and high school grades 7–12), and Higher Level (undergraduate and graduate studies). Compulsory between ages of 5-18.

**Quality of life:** Literacy rate: 94.1%. High unemployment, high cost of living, high debt levels, but also increase in literacy, life expectancy, and medical services and decrease in infant mortality.

**Cultural Point:** Baseball is the most popular sport. Puerto Ricans tend to communicate in a loud and direct manner, using their hands and speaking very quickly. Direct eye contact is the norm as it shows respect and interest.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Spanish	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /dʒ/ <b>wage, judge</b> /ŋ/ <b>sing</b> /z/ <b>rise</b> /ʃ/ <b>push</b> /v/ <b>voice</b> /h/ <b>hot</b>	/ʌ/ <b>up</b> /ə/ <b>about, supply</b> /ɪ/ <b>ship</b> /ɛ/ <b>met</b> /æ/ <b>cat</b> /ɔ/ <b>saw</b>	-Nouns are masculine and feminine -Negation uses two words (i.e. double negative) - Adjectives follow nouns -All sounds are written making spelling in English challenging -Days of the week, months, languages are not capitalized -Ends of verbs indicate the tense and person and number of the subject -‘s’ on the third person singular present tense in English causes problems -Concepts like hunger, age, temperature are expressed with ‘have’ instead of ‘be’ (e.g. I have hunger in Spanish, instead of I am hungry in English) -Few consonant blends -Consonant blends like ‘sp’ ‘st’ ‘sk’ don’t exist without the initial ‘e,’ so pronunciation and writing in English for Spanish dominant learners produces ‘esp’ ‘est’ or ‘esk’ - Possessive is formed without the ‘s. Instead it uses ‘of’ - /b/ and /v/ sound very similar and are often confused when learning English



# RWANDA



**Capital:** Kigali

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Varied

**Language(s):** The country's principal language is Kinyarwanda, which is spoken by most Rwandans.

**Form of government:** Unitary parliamentary democracy

**Popular religion:** Christianity

**Conflict:** War, along with several political and economic upheavals, exacerbated ethnic tensions, culminating in April 1994 in a state-orchestrated genocide, in which Rwandans killed up to a million of their fellow citizens, including approximately three-quarters of the Tutsi population.

**Education system profile:** The education level, in Rwanda, remains low despite implementation of the policies such as mandatory education for primary school (6 years) and lower secondary schooling (3 years) that is run by state schools.

**Quality of life:** Rwanda has a low gross domestic product largely due to genocide, civil wars, corruption, poor access to education, and the effects of HIV/AIDS.

**Cultural Point:** Rwanda does not have a long history of written literature, but there is a strong oral tradition ranging from poetry to folk stories. Many of the country's moral values and details of history have been passed down through the generations.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other language features of note when learning English:
Kinyarwanda	/ð/ <b>this, think</b> /θ/ <b>thing, the</b> /r/ <b>ready</b> /dʒ/ <b>wage, judge</b> /l/ <b>let</b> /h/ <b>hot</b>	/æ/ <b>cat</b> /ə/ <b>about, supply</b> /əʊ/ <b>show</b> /ɪə/ <b>here</b> /tʊə/ <b>tourist</b> /ɔɪ/ <b>coin/</b> /eə/ <b>hair</b> /aɪ/ <b>like</b> /aʊ/ <b>mouth</b>	-Tonal language -Verb tense is formed through infixes and person prefixes -No diphthongs -Adjectives follow the noun -Spelling is very close to the pronunciation of words, which could cause a problem with English spelling

# UGANDA



**Capital:** Kampala

**Continent:** Africa

**Climate:** Varied

**Language(s):** The official languages are English and Swahili, although multiple other languages are spoken in the country. Uganda is ethnologically diverse, with at least 40 languages in usage. Luganda is the most common language.

**Form of government:** Presidential Republic

**Popular religion:** Christianity (84%)

**Conflict:** Armed conflict, ethnic violence.

**Education system profile:** Although some primary education is compulsory under law, in many rural communities this is not observed as many families feel they cannot afford costs such as uniforms and equipment. Illiteracy is common in Uganda, particularly among females.

**Quality of life:** Uganda is one of the poorest nations in the world, with 37.7% of the population living on less than \$1.25 a day. Poverty remains deep-rooted in the country's rural areas, which are home to more than 85% of Ugandans.

**Cultural Point:** Lake Kyoga forms the northern boundary for the Bantu-speaking peoples, who dominate much of east, central and southern Africa. In Uganda, they include the Baganda and several other tribes. In the north live the Lango and the Acholi, who speak Nilotic languages. To the east are the Iteso and Karamojong, who speak a Nilotic language. A few Pygmies live isolated in the rainforests of western Uganda.

Language	Difficult Consonants When Learning English	Difficult vowels When Learning English	Other features of note when learning English:
Swahili	/ʒ/ measure /j/ jump /r/ red /l/ light	/ʌ/ up /ə/ about, supply /ɪ/ ship /æ/ cat /ʊ/ book /ɒ/ not /eə/ hair /aɪ/ like /ʊə/ tourist /ɔɪ/ coin/ /iə/ here /əʊ/ show	-Have many prefixes and suffixes -Almost all words end in a vowel -All open syllables -No diphthongs -/r/ and /l/ are often interchanged -Written in both Latin and Arabic alphabets -16 noun classes -Swahili is the second language of 140 million people

*These country cards include the following information:  
the country's capital, climate, spoken language(s), form of government,  
conflict, religion, education system, quality of life, and key cultural points.  
Each card also includes a contrastive analysis for the primary language  
spoken in each country. We invite you to use these cards as resources in  
getting to know your English learners' native country,  
culture and language.*

**Resources:**

[www.lonweb.org](http://www.lonweb.org)

[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov)

[www.omniglot.com](http://www.omniglot.com)

[www.mandinka.org](http://www.mandinka.org)

[www.djembefola.com](http://www.djembefola.com)

[www.africanlanguages.com](http://www.africanlanguages.com)

Learner English (2001) by: Michael Swan & Bernard Smith

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