



Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages

By Gaston Dorren



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Whether you're a frequent visitor to Europe or just an armchair traveler, the surprising and extraordinary stories in *Lingo* will forever change the way you think about the continent, and may even make you want to learn a new language.

Lingo spins the reader on a whirlwind tour of sixty European languages and dialects, sharing quirky moments from their histories and exploring their commonalities and differences. Most European languages are descended from a single ancestor, a language not unlike Sanskrit known as Proto-Indo-European (or PIE for short), but the continent's ever-changing borders and cultures have given rise to a linguistic and cultural diversity that is too often forgotten in discussions of Europe as a political entity. *Lingo* takes us into today's remote mountain villages of Switzerland, where Romansh is still the lingua franca, to formerly Soviet Belarus, a country whose language was Russified by the Bolsheviks, to Sweden, where up until the 1960s polite speaking conventions required that one never use the word "you" in conversation, leading to tiptoeing questions of the form: "Would herr generaldirektör Rexed like a biscuit?"

Spanning six millenia and sixty languages in bite-size chapters, *Lingo* is a hilarious and highly edifying exploration of how Europe speaks.

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Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages By Gaston Dorren Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

Praise for *Lingo*:

“[Dorren’s] deep and broad expertise allows him to take a familiar, mostly bemused approach to the linguistic patchwork of Europe . . . as enlightening as it is entertaining.”—*Boston Globe*

“A wonderful read . . . [Dorren’s] lively and insightful book takes the reader on a linguistic tour of Europe. In 60 witty, bite-sized chapters, Dorren makes sense of the babel of voices, exploring the origins of the continent’s languages and dialects and highlighting the surprise commonalities, stark differences and quirky singularities . . . Practically every page comes studded with at least one fascinating fact . . . illuminating and entertaining . . . [A] unique, page-turning book”—*Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Mr. Dorren’s language tourism takes in not just the familiar monuments of English, French, Spanish, and German but also the unsung marvels of Latvian, Cornish, and Luxembourgish . . . A brisk and breezy tour . . . Bulge[s] with linguistic trivia . . . [Dorren] has an eye for genuinely surprising detail . . . [His] book is a peppy advertisement for the rewards of having several languages in one’s head.”—*Wall Street Journal*

“[A] playful survey of sixty languages spoken in Europe . . . Dorren gives voice to an important linguistic truth: ‘Today’s errors tend to become tomorrow’s correct usage.’”—*New Yorker*

“*Lingo* features amusing tales from five dozen languages, languages that define the nations of Europe . . . a great example of how language helps us get a little insight into the many cultures of Europe.”—**Rick Steves, Travel with Rick Steves**

“A worldly delight . . . This language writer dazzles. His stylistic flair is more than just entertaining—it crystallizes abstract ideas he conveys through vivid imagery . . . Dorren approaches his subject with passion and humour. His chapters are diverse, each normally highlighting the peculiarities of a single language . . . Dorren’s pace is swift . . . For language tourists, *Lingo* is a tour de force.”—*Winnipeg Free Press*

“[Dorren’s] linguistic tour is fascinating, funny, surprising, and enlightening.”—**Jane Ciabattari, BBC Culture (10 Books to Read in December)**

“This linguistic-led trip of the tongues across Europe doles out bite-size *bon mots* about the history, eccentricities and diversity of languages both obvious (German) and obscure (Gagauz). Plus, it’s laugh-out-loud funny—and that’s in all languages.”—**American Way (December Picks for the Traveler)**

“Dorren’s book is so much fun a reader might feel that half of Babel’s curse has already been lifted.”—*National Post*

“*Lingo* is a charming, well-researched tour of the languages, language families, and linguistic history of Europe . . . While keeping readers entertained, [Dorren] manages to cover not just the usual suspects but also such languages as Sami, Yiddish, Romani, Armenian, Ossetian, Basque, Welsh, Manx, and Esperanto . . . Dorren’s entertaining book is just right for academic consumption and a nice treat for general readers looking for an overview of linguistic Europe.”—**CHOICE**

“[A] fascinating read . . . Covering the idiosyncracies of 50-plus languages, from the spelling of Scots Gaelic to the counting conventions of Breton, Dorren weaves tales of conquest, social mores and isolating landscapes with remarkable ease . . . From Yiddish to Romani to English, the book is entertaining. Now, if only I can remember all these anecdotes for my next party.”—***MultiLingual***

“Wonderful . . . This intriguing, thoughtful book will delight those who love words; it is also a round, solid education in the vastness of the world’s citizens’ ability and desire to express themselves . . . Amusing, too!”—***Booklist***

“In this bubbly linguistic endeavor, journalist and polyglot Dorren covers the evolution and peccadillos of 60 European languages . . . Dorren thoughtfully walks readers through the weird evolution of languages . . . with quirky tidbits aplenty . . . Rounded out with helpful insights such as the impact of Martin Luther . . . and the refutation of the notion that Eskimos have 100 words for snow . . . Dorren has crafted an immersive and illuminating study of something many of us take for granted.”—***Publishers Weekly***

“Dutch linguist and journalist Dorren . . . reveals many intriguing nuggets of information about languages from the familiar (French, German, Spanish) to the arcane (Manx, Ossetian, Sorbian) . . . For linguists and readers truly thrilled by the meticulous study of languages.”—***Kirkus Reviews***

“For language lovers and those who enjoy obscure facts, European culture, and politics—or all of the above—*Lingo* will be an entertaining book to dip into, a tasting menu of the pleasures of languages.”—***Shelf Awareness***

“A joyful guided tour around Europe’s linguistic landscape . . . genuinely interesting and enormous fun. Particularly impressive is Dorren’s ability to flip with ease from jokes and surprising facts to the discussion of complex linguistic ideas. . . . For the sadly monoglot, *Lingo* is a wake-up call: a book that brims with joy at linguistic variety and invention, and reminds us what he—and we—are missing.”—***Sunday Telegraph***

“The depth and breadth of [Dorren’s] understanding and knowledge are awesome . . . this charming, funny and fascinating gem of a book has persuaded me of the richness we are in danger of losing.”—***Times (UK)***

“I can’t praise it enough. If you ever wanted to know how exactly Finnish and Hungarian are related and how Turkish fits in, it is clearly explained here in two to three pages. And so is everything else you ever wanted to learn about European languages but were afraid to ask. Brilliant, witty, excellent!”—***Times Higher Education Supplement, Best Books of 2014***

“Learned and pleasantly ironic . . . In this entertaining exercise in “language tourism,” the author isn’t frightened of making judgments. . . Impressively, he has taken classes in many of the languages he writes about, as well as in sign language, about which he writes illuminatingly . . . His tour of the continent is a richly diverting exercise, organized into sections on languages and their families, history, politics, writing, vocabulary, grammar and state of endangeredness. He has something interesting to point out about nearly every topic.”—***Guardian***

“A series of quirky linguistic stories full of etymological pleasures . . . if you believe Umberto Eco, “The language of Europe is translation.” And certainly much of what’s revealing in *Lingo* is to be found not in the narratives or mechanics of individual languages but in the interface between them. . . . there are many etymological pleasures to be had from this book. . . full of charm and pleasing detail.”—***Spectator***

“*Lingo* is not meant to be an encyclopedia but a language “amuse-bouche”. Smorgasbord might be a better

description: through sixty compelling stories about European linguistics, it tells us an impressive amount about Europe. . . . an entertaining, accessible guide.”—*Financial Times*

“Full of odd linguistic facts . . . fascinating.”—*Times Literary Supplement*

“I love this book. It’s witty and informative, with a wealth of engaging comments on all things language-related. . . . Such amusements, along with the book’s mine of information, make this a great seasonal stocking filler — whether you’re a lingophile or not.”—*Morning Star*

“A new approach to understanding the world . . . ideal for any cunning linguist.”—*Wanderlust*

“A multitude of dinner-party facts: there’s no such thing as Norwegian (the ‘national tongue’ comprises a collection of regional dialects); that Spaniards utter an average 7.82 syllables a second; and that the last speaker of Dalmatian, in a rare example of a language dying with a bang instead of a whimper, was killed by a land mine.”—*Geographical Magazine*

About the Author

Gaston Dorren is a linguist, journalist, and polyglot. He speaks Dutch, Limburgish, English, German, French, and Spanish, and reads nine more languages. He is the author of two books in Dutch, and the creator of an app, The Language Lover's Guide to Europe. Dorren lives in the Netherlands.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Raymond Levine:

Here thing why this specific Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages are different and dependable to be yours. First of all studying a book is good but it really depends in the content from it which is the content is as tasty as food or not. Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any e-book out there but there is no guide that similar with Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages. It gives you thrill reading journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing that happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your method home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of Lingo: Around Europe in Sixty Languages in e-book can be your alternate.

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